ہے۔ تو میں آپکے مادھیم سے محترمہ چیر میں صاحبہ۔ یہ کہنا چاہتا ہوں۔

نظام میکدہ ہے اس قدر بگڑا ہوا ساقی
انھیں کو جام ملتا ہے۔ جنھیں پینا نہیں آتا۔

جنکو ضرورت نہیں ہے وہاں پر گاڑیاں چلائی جاتی ہیں۔ جہاں لوگ مر رہے ہیں۔ دھکے کھا رہے ہیں۔ جیسے بیشو کو بند کیا جاتا ہے۔ ریلوے کمپارٹمنٹ میں اس طریقے سے لوگوں کو بھرا جاتا ہے وہاں پر گاڑیاں چلانے کا کوئی نام نہیں لیتا۔ تو میں آپکی وساطت سے سرکار سے درخواست کرنا چاہتا ہوں کہ وہ لوگ جو ان علاقوں میں رہتے ہیں جنکی کوئی سدھ بدھ لینے والا نہیں ہے کیونکہ آج تک وہاں کا ریلوے منسٹر نہیں بنا۔ خدا کے واسطے ان پر رحم کیجیے۔ لوگوں کی بہت بڑی ڈمانڈ ہے۔ اسکو پورا کیجیے۔ یہی میری آپ سے درخواست ہے۔

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Shrimati Malti Sharma. She is not here.

We shall now take up the short-duration discussion on the steep pre-Budget hike in the prices of petrol and other petroleum products and its impact on the masses. Shri Narayanasamy is going to initiate the discussion. Shri V. Narayanasamy.

SHORT DURATION DISCUSSION

Steep Pre-Budget hike is Prices of Petrol and Petroleum Products and its Impact on the Masses

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY (Pondicherry): Madam Vice-Chairman, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to initiate the discussion on the steep rise in the prices of petrol and petroleum products that has been imposed by the present United Front Government.

Madam, on the 2nd July, 1996, the present Government increased the price of petrol by 25 per cent, that of diesel by 30 per cent and that of LPG by 30 per cent, saying that they were unable to mop up resources for the purpose of purchasing crude because in the oil pool account, there was a shortage. If the said account were to be maintained like that, the oil corporations would not have sufficient funds. Madam, it is a hard decision. This decision, according to them, will lead to mopping up resources of Rs. 7,900 crores for nine months and Rs. 12,900 crores for the whole financial year. Madam, this increase is unprecedented and from the Congress party, we deplore the decision of the United Front Government for taking such a decision putting the burden on the common man.

Madam, I came to know that there were some remarks made by the Finance Minister.

The Finance Minister said that for the last two years, the Congress Government did not increase the price of petroleum products, and therefore, the deficit has gone high. Madam, if you go through the history, in 1986, some of the funds had been transferred. It is a fact. But in 1990 when there was no Congress Government, the prices of petroleum products had gone up by 25 per cent. Then in 1992, a marginal increase was effected in the price of petroleum products by the Congress Government. In 1994, we made a marginal increase. As far as LPG is concerned, the increase in the price was only Rs. 10/- per cylinder. But the in-

crease that has been effected by the present Government comes to 25 per cent. So, not only the BJP and the Congress parties who are sitting on the Opposition Benches but also the thirteen constituents of the United Front Government have started opposing the move. I would start with the CPI(M). The CPI(M) made a very nice remark in a polished manner saying that the Government, instead of trying to find out an unearth the tax evaders who are rich and mop up resources through them, they have taxed common man by bringing the price hike on the petroleum products. I would also like to quote what the CPI has said. I quote: "It is all the more deplorable that the United Front Government have mounted this attack on administered prices by raising their prices just one week prior to the commencement of the Budget Session of Parliament. This is anti-people and anti-democratic practice." This is what has been said by the official spokesman of the CPI. Not only these two parties but the DMK leader also, who is the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and who had to come to Delhi in order to attend the Chief Ministers conference at Delhi, cancelled his programme. He was upset with the decision of increasing the prices of petroleum products by the United Front Government. (*Interruptions*)

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): Sir, the hon. Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu was slighly indisposed of on that day. That is why he could not come. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, I do not know their inner party problem.

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G.VENKATRAMAN): Yes. This is a fact and that is why we disputed his statement. Had it not been so we would not have disputed his statement. We know the fact. That is why we are disputing his statement. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Now I quote from the Press reports and I will agree with them if they correct me.

SHRI T.G.VENKATRAMAN: The report is not correct. That is what he is saying.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): But you have corrected him now.

SHRI T.R.BAALU: No, Madam. Through you, I want to correct him.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN: But now you have him because he did not know why he was not there. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE (Maharashtra): But they do not know what they have achieved by correcting him.

SHRI T.R.BAALU: He is my friend. It is my duty to correct him. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: They will agree with me because I do not want to have any kind of confrontation with them in this respect whether the Chief Minister was indisposed of or not. I do not want to go into that matter. But the Chief Minister was really upset with the decision of the United Front Government in raising the prices of petroleum products. I would like to know from the hon. Minister of State for Petroleum whether he agrees with me that the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu was upset with the decision of the United Front Government in effecting this increase in the prices of petroleum products and he said that he would take this matter up with the Prime Minister.

Then, Madam, the leader of the Tamil Manila Congress, who is an hon. Member of this House, has also said that his party is not happy with the decision of the United Front Government in increasing the prices of petroleum products. There are other parties aslo--the RSP and so many other parties, who have not agreed with the decision. I have already mentioned the CPI, the CPI(M). From our party, though we are the supporting party, our party spokesman, Mr. Gadgil, has

stated and I quote: "It is true that during Congress regime, we had increased the price of petroleum products. But never there was such a steep rise. The irony of it is that the parties, which at that time criticised us, have themselves now increased the prices of petroleum products. The same Janata Dal which criticised the Congress Government for a small rise in the price of petroleum products, now they are sitting in the ruling party and they have increased the price of petroleum products. Now their Members are keeping quiet. The Janata Dal Members are keeping quiet and some of them, including Mr. Som Pal.....

SHRI SOM PAL (Uttar Pradesh): The steepness was precipitated by your deferring the small increases for a long time.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Therefore, Madam, I want to show the extent of agony and feeling of the Members of Parliament and various political parties on the decision taken by the Government.

Now, I will come to the question of propriety of this Government in increasing the price of petroleum products. Madam, Shri Gurudas Das Gupta, a very senior Member of this House and so many other Members used to raise a lot of hue and cry when the Congress Government increased the prices of some administered commodities before the Budget, Several times they raised this issue in the House. They used to say that the Congress Government was trying to impose tax on people by indirect method. Taday, I am standing on this side of the House and am putting that question to them. Madam, on 2nd of July 1996, at midnight, the prices were increased. The Railway Budget was presented yesterday. On 22nd July, 1996, the General Budget is to be presented by the hon. Finance Minister.

श्री मौलाना ओबैदुल्ला खान आजमी (बिहार): ये आधी रात के समय का क्या मतलब है, यह समझ में नहीं आया।

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: You have to put that question to your Prime Minister.

SHRI N.K.P.SALVE: He stands corrected. Now let him go on.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN) MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): He is your Prime Minister also. Don't forget this fact.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, he is the Prime Minister first beacuse he is from the ruling party. He is my Prime Minister also. I don't deny that. Is it not an act of impropriety on the part of the Government to increase the price of the petroleum products by mopping up resources and at a later date when the Government comes with the General Budget before the House, they will say that they have not imposed any tax on the people because their Government is pro-people Government? It is the Government which come from the villages. It is the Kisan Government and the Prime Minister will say that he is the son of a Kisan. All these things will be said in this House. Madam, I want a ruling from the Chair whether such a decision taken by the Government without taking Parliament into confidence when the summons had been issued about the convening of the Budget Session of Parliament is right. I would like to know whether this Government has got a right to increase the prices without taking the members of Parliament into confidence. A decision has been taken without taking Members of Parliament into confidence. Therefore I want a ruling from the Chair whether such a decision taken by the Government when the General Budget is to be presented and when the Parliament has been summoned, and when a decision of this kind for moppiing up resources to the tune of Rs. 9,700 crores has been taken is right or not. The common man has been burdened like anything. Madam, I have gone through some interview given by some official of the Petroleum Ministry. He said that the demand for the petroleum products has increased. The Gulf was made the price of crude to increase. He has given so

many other reasons for the said increase. They said: "If we are not forced to take such a decision at this stage, we will not be having sufficient funds to import the petroleum products for the months of June and July. This is the statement given by the officials of the Petroleum Ministry. Madam, I would like to say the same situation prevailed in 1995-96... when the Congress Government was there. The Congress Government was able to manage the situation without imposing the tax burden on the common man. Madam, please see what has happened today. Within four days the Prime Minister was pleased to announce a 15 per cent reduction in the diesel prices! ...(*interruptions*)... Yes, he has announced it. Madam, they have also said that the Government is losing more than ...(*interruption*)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Narayanasamy, will you yield for a minute, please?

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY Yes, Madam.

THE VICE CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): You see that the time given for the Short Duration Discussion is 2½ hours and the time allotted to your Party is 57 minutes. Before me there is a list of nearly seven Members from your Party. So, I would request you to keep the time in mind and proceed further.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: All right.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA (West Bengal): That does not make any difference. For Narayanasamy one minute looks like one hour. If he speaks for 57 minutes, it is like 57 hours!

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The Prime Minister said that he has reduced the price of diesel by 15 per cent. Regarding petrol and diesel, the Prime Minister said categorically. Madam, on the other side, we have heard the hon. Home Minister saying that the Government is going to reduce the price of LPG; he made a statement in Madras and the Prime Minister detracted from it. "There is no question of reduction." And ultimately Shri I.K. Gujral, the Leader of the House, has to come to the House and say that the Government has not taken any decision! Madam, I am telling you about the way in which the Government is moving; it has not taken any decision to reduce the price of LPG. I would like to tell the hon. Petroleum Minister, who is a practical man-he is also a villager and he will agree with me-that today cooking gas is being used by the people living in villages. More than one crore families are using cooking gas in this country. I find an advertisement coming every day in the newspapers. The advertisement is given in Malaysia, in Singapore, in Japan, and I do not know which of the other countries they will quote. You see the prices of petroleum products in all those countries. Compared to them, in India they are less; everybody knows that. Why are you telling us all this? Madam, they are very nicely giving it in English newspapers, but it is not going in local language. They want to compare the tiny countries with India. They do not want to compare it with the big countries. And they say that the subsidy is this much; the Government is giving a subsidy of Rs.8000 crores this year. Madam, it is not the U.S. Government alone that is giving subsidies. The Congress Government has been giving subsidies for the last several years. It is not your product. It has been conceived by the Congress Government; that you have inherited. Therefore, do not claim credit for saying that you are going to give subsidy. Madam, this is new habit started by the Ministry, statements being issued by Secretaries, statements being issued by Under Secretaries; the Ministry is keeping quiet, and, therefore, the graph is coming in the newspapers. Madam, I would like to show you one or two advertisements that have come in the newspapers. One is about the graph and the other is about the price. These are all appearing in the press every day. They said, they do not have sufficient funds. But I do not know how they get funds for

the purpose of advertisement! They have said that no revision has been made for the last two years and, therefore, it has resulted in such a situation. Madam, I would like to tell them that there are ways and means of mopping up resources; kinldy do not resort to the acts of putting the burden on the common man. Madam, today they have said that only the rich people the people who are using Cielo car or Ersteem car are using petrol. I tell the hon. Minister in this House that the people who are going on two-wheelers, the millions of people living in this country, even the people living in rural areas, use it as a transport. The Transport Minister is sitting by the side of the Petroleum Minister.

Madam, they use petrol. They are the common people, the poor people, the middle-class people. Don't think only the rich class, only 10% of the people, are using petrol. Today the people who are living in the villages are going by taxi. When they go by taxi they have to shell out more money. It is these common people who are paying the money. Petrol is being used not by the rich man alone. Kindly remove that impression from your mind. What is the increase in the price of LPG? The increase is Rs. 26 or Rs.28. It is the housewives who are cursing these people. Housewives say that such a steep increase has not been made by any Government so far. During the Congress regime we had increased the price by Rs.10 per cylinder in 1994.

SHRI MAHESHWAR SINGH (Himachal Pradesh): They are cursing you also for supporting such a Government.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The people of this country will not curse us because we did not support you.

This steep hike is agitating the minds of the people in this country. The people are feeling the pinch of it. The Government is claiming that it is for the poor people, the middle-class people. Today even the Members of Parliament are feeling that they should not have a vehicle of their own. Such a situation has come. The price increase that has been made by this Government, whatever analogy they may use they will say that the oil pool account deficit should be filled up; if it is not increased it is going to come down by Rs.2,000 crores; they will state all these calculations, all these economic theories—is not justifiable. Not a single organisation, whether it is an industry or whether it is Chambers of Commerce and Industry or whether it is any other organisation, has supported this move. They deplored the decision. Where will it lead us to? The official spokesman of the Ministry says that the inflation rate would be 2%. But the Finance Ministry says that it would be 3% to 4%. They should see the background. What is going to happen? The transport cost will increase. The prices of agricultural commodities will increase. Apart from that, there will be a sharp increase in the industrial side. Already there is inflation and this inflation will lead us to further inflation and it will rise to double digit which the common man will not be able to bear. Therefore, we made a request from our party side. They should have consulted the political parties who are supporting them. They should have consulted their constituent parties. They have taken an arbitrary decision. It is deplorable that the Finance Minister of this country is trying to defend it and is accusing the Congress Government. The Finance Minister says that the Congress Government had not done it and the present Government are not responsible for it. Therefore, I want a categorical answer from the Minister whether they are going to reduce the price of petroleum products, especially petrol and cooking gas. It is the common man who will be affected by this increase. Kindly don't keep in your mind the impression that it is only the rich man who is going to be affected by this increase. If they feel that it is only 10% of the people who are going to be affected by this price increase, I would like to tell the hon. Minister that I am

prepared to give him the statistics.

Now as regards efficiency, what is happening? They should have efficiency. When crude goes into the refinery and the products come out, there should be 90% efficiency. What is the efficiency today? It is only 70%. When the world average is 90%, in India it is only 70%. They should try to improve their efficiency and try to get more resources. Without doing that they should not burden the common man. It is a very good idea given by the CPM that first of all they should try to get more resources by taxing the rich. By taxing the rich they can get more resources. How much black money is there in the country? Try to unearth that money. Try to get more funds or resources by taxing the rich. Don't tax the poor man. If they tax the poor man there will be a revolution in this country and these people, who are saying that they are for the poor people, will not survive on the support of the rich man.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Narayanasamy, please conclude.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, I will conclude after making one point more.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): How much time will it take?

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Only one minute, Madam.

In the interest of the Government the Prime Minister should not take a rigid stand. He has taken a rigid stand in the other House. He should not take a rigid stand. Madam, they should reduce the price of, at least, cooking gas which is used by the womenfolk. They must do something; otherwise, all the women will come to the streets and will fight with them. It is good that they have reduced the price of diesel by 15 per cent. It is a very good decision because diesel is used by the farming community and many other people. The only reason which they are giving is, they are going to spend Rs.25,000 crores on the import of crude oil. The Congress Government came forward with a scheme for oil exploration. They should continue with that scheme. They should try to increase the production of oil in this country instead of depending upon the imported oil. They should not depend upon imported oil. They can get more oil if they continue with this scheme. They should try to improve the efficiency of refineries. By doing this they will be able to mop up more resources. I have given a solution for this purpose.

I would request the Prime Minister and the Minister of State for Petroleum to come before the House and say that they are going to reduce the prices of petrol and LPG by 15 per cent; otherwise,they will have to incur the wrath of the people of this country and they will be condemned.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I think if men start cooking, the Government will reduce the prices. Shri Satish Agarwal.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL (Rajasthan): Thank you, Madam. As a preface to my observations and arguments on the subject under discussion, I would like to place on record that I on behalf of my party had given a notice of a motion under Rule 168 for an expression of a decision by this hon. House that we forthwith reject this hike in prices. But I was completely isolated becuase of those who fought along with me in the last five years in this House for Rule 168.

This House may recall that on the telecom scandal the whole stalemate was on account of the Opposition insisting that the debate should taken place under rule 168. But the Government wanted that it should be under Rule 176. I along with Dr. Biplab Dasgupta and Shri Gurudas Das Gupta and all the Janata Dal Members took a stiff fight against the Government of the day that it should be under Rule 168. That was the main bone of contention for stalling the proceedings for 10 to 15 days. ...(*Interruption*)...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA (West Bengal): Will Shri Agarwal yield for a moment? The issue is not that. We have differed definitely on the modalities of discussion. But that does not mean that the parties who are in support of the Govenrment and the parties who are in Opposition are not taking a unified stand even today at this hour in this House in demanding the reversal of the decision.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I am very happy to see this reaction from my esteemed colleague Shri Gurudas Das Gupta. As a matter of fact, if that is the attitude of the parties forming the Government or constituting the Government, there is no need for a debate.

3.00 P.M. After all, the Prime Minister has a strength of 44 Members which is not equivalent to the quorum in the Lok Sabha—the quorum is 55—it is less than 55 Members. So, it is only on the basis of the support of parties like the CPI, the Janata Dal, the DMK or the TDP and some support from the CPM also, though they are not in the Government, but he is very much there. So, if you are really sincere about the withdrawal of this hike, if you are not hypocritical about the withdrawal of this hike, then it is very much within your power to pressurise the Government to withdraw this hike. But you are opposing this hike in this House just to please your constituency not sincerely.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: It is not a question of hypocracy. It is a question of a genuine common demand seeking reversal of the decision. Let us believe in each others respect for the Parliamentary system and for fighting the common cause of the people.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Thank you. I will hear your speech. Anyway, with this preface, Madam, I would like to say that so far as this hike is concerned, it is wholly unwarranted and it is whooly unjustified. The principle of economics is that prices are determined on the basis of the demand position and the supply position. There are two ways of controlling it. Either you have a demand management policy or you have a supply management policy. The Government has chosen the first option of demand management. Increase the prices and curb the demand. Increase the prices and mobilise the resources. What about the supply position? What about the supply management? Has this Government, including the previous one, ever addressed itself to this question? My colleagues are here and I am not here for having any acrimonious debate at all. But I am placing facts for your kind consideration. Have we ever addressed ourselves, during the last five years or so, to the supply management side, to increasing the production of domestic cruds or increasing the capacity of our refineries? We have simply wasted out time, during the last five years, on granting from out-of-turn discretionary quotas, petrol-pumps, gas agencies and all that. What is the position now? What was the position in 1991? I am quoting from the Economic Survey-1991. I will not go into much detail. The chapter is-'Infrastructure' at page 55. According to the details given here, the production of crude oil in 1988-89 was 32 million tonnes. In 1989-90, it was 34 million tonnes. In 1993-94, that is, three to four years later, it came down to 27 million tonnes. In 1994-95, of course, it has touched again the 1988-89 level, that is, 34 million tonnes. How is it that from 32 million tonnes in 1988-89, it came down to 27 million tonnes in 1993-94? Was there proper planning on the part of the Government or the Ministry of Petroleum? Mr. Balu, I will be as soft as possible so far as criticism against your Ministry is concerned because you are new. But please take note of such things which need correction hereafter. You have increased the prices. We are demanding withdrawal. Some are demanding reduction. I know that you are neither going to reduce it nor going to withdraw it. This debate is a useless debate that way. The Prime Minister has already

made this clear. When the Prime Minister can reject the demand for reducing the LPG prices made by his Union Minister, Shri Indrajit Gupta in Madras—if he can outrightly reject the demand so genially made by his own colleague as big as the union Home Minister—he is not going to care for my demand. Even then, because we are having a debate, I making my submission. I am not criticising you on the ground that this is going to create hardship. that is beside the point. But why should the Government not concentrate on the supply mangement side? It is because, unfortunately, in this country, during the last 40 year, certain sections of society have developed vested interests in the economy of shortages. When there is a shortage there is blackmarketing, the prices go up and the consumer is looted. The same thing has been done by the Government during the last five years. I want this Government to take corrective steps. The Government has to explain what effective planning they have to do. Madam, I don't want to take the valuable time of this hon. House I have got the Economic Surveys of 1995-96, 1990-91 and also of the earlier ones from which it is abundantly clear that the Government has no desire to manage the supply management side or to increase the supply. That is why we are depending upon imports. Naturally, the demand has to be met. How do we meet it? We have to import. When we import, naturally the import bill goes up. The import bill goes up not so much on account of the increasing demand as by the undeclared devaluation of the rupee which was made by the previous Government and which is being followed by this Government. This morning, my colleague, Shri Ashok Mitra along with Shri Gurudas Das Gupta, I and others raised the question of undeclared devaluation of the rupee. Now the exchange value is Rs. 35.50. it was Rs. 40/-. I wrote a letter to the Finance Minister in this regard. This House must be surprised to note that there is another report by some World Bank organisation that according to the Purchasing Power parity (PPP) formula, the real value of the rupee in terms of the dollar is 10.5. Rs. 10.5 is the real value of a dollar on the basis of the PPP formula. Mr. Ashok Mitra, you must agree with me on this point. I wrote a letter to the Finance Minsiter that if, on the basis of the PPP ratio, the value of one dollar is equivalent to Rs. 10.5, why are you permitting the loot of this country? We have fixed the prices practically
at Rs. 35/- which means three times its real value. He wrote back to me. In his reply, he said, "If we accept your proposal of accepting this PPP formula, then our exports will be adversely affected." So, that was the Prime consideration. The exporters want the value to even come up to Rs. 50/-. They tend to benefit because by exporting goods, for every dollar that get Rs. 50 in exchange. They are not liable to pay income-tax. So, the exporters benefit out of the depreciation of the value of the rupee. But the imports become costlier. And when the exports are less and the imports are more, it is ultimately the country which loses. We, do not have a favourable trade balance. We have a deficit account. The trade deficit amounts to 3 billion dollars, namely, more than Rs. 10,000 crores. So, if the imports are more and the exports are less. who loses? The country loses because we are paying more for imports. But this is the policy of the Government. That is why we want to know from this Government as to whether this Government also is going to perpetuate this policy of undeclared devaluation of the rupee.....*(Interruptions)*

SHRI ASHOK MITRA (West Bengal): Mr. Satish Agarwal, will you kindly yield for half a minute? Of course, with all that you have said about the external value of the rupee, the real value of it and the value to which you have been bamboozled, I wish that you and your party had made this statement in June-Jully, 1991, when the previous Government, at one go, shot upon the value of the rupee from 1:17 to 1:31. You

then were great admirers of the economic liberalisation. I am sorry for you.....

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: But we did criticise the devaluation in July, 1991 in unreserved terms. BJP never supported that move of devaluation. So far as devaluation is concerned, the BJP, consistently, has stood for a strong currency. Madam, in the morning, I made a point that when the rupee was made to bounce back to Rs. 26 or so two years back, namely, in 1994-95, the Reserve Bank of India, at that time, was permitted to make heavy purchases from the market. It was near about 15 billion dollars or 40 thousand crores. Forty thousand crores' worth of dollars were purchased by the Reserve Bank of India just to keep the value of the rupee down. Otherwise, rupee at that time was bouncing back to be around Rs. 26-27 per dollar. This is the only country in the world which is very much interested in the devaluation of its currency. A nation's strength lies in the strength or its currency. If the currency is devalued like this, I don't know where this country will go. Our external debt liability will go up. The Finance Minister presented to the members of Parliament a White Paper, some sort of that, on the external debt position. In that, he said that during 1994-95, external debt payment had gone up to Rs. 18,000 crores on account of appreciation of the dollar vis-a-vis the rupee. Our external debt would automatically go up if the value of rupee goes down. The only consideration of the Government is boosting of our exports. I don't know whose baby this is. I don't know what their fancy is. After all. we have to see the things in their totality. Anyway I have made the point. Devaluation of the rupee will lead to costly imports. But it is within the power of the Government to strengthen our currency vis-a-vis the dollar and other international currencies so that imports do not become costlier.

I would like to make another point and it is with regard to production. I would like to quote from the 48th Report of the Committee on Public Undertakings (1995-96) on the Ministry of petroleum and Natural Gas. I quote from para 11 of the report:

> "The Committee regreat to note that there is hardly any progress in finalisation of the updated Corporate Perspective Plan-2007 and the Long Range Plan 2002 since June, 1994 when the representatives of IOC had stated before the Committee during evidence that these documents were in the process of being updated. To say the least, it is height of lack of initiative and interest on the part of IOC as also lack or proper monitoring on the part of the Government for the Company to have dragged their feet on such a vital issue more so in the changed economic scenario where IOC finds itself in a new environment of competition in refining and marketing of petroleum products...."

How adversely has the Committee commented on the Corporate Perspective Plan-2007 and the Long Range Plan-2002! Has the hon. Minister gone through it? I don't think he has ever gone through it. The Chairman of the Committee was Mr. Kamal Chaudhry and all parties were represented on the Committee. I further quote from para 20:

> "In view of the long span of six years already taken for approval of the proposal for expansion of Gujarat Refinery, the Committee would like to impress upon the Government to spare no efforts in getting the proposal cleared without any further loss of time....."

In the case of Gujarat Refinery, it took six year, but the proposal was not cleared. I would now deal with the Haldia Refinery which I think should interest Dr. Biplab Dasgupta. I now quote from para 21:

> ".....The Committee had noted that the proposal for MMTPA Expansion of Haldia Refinery initiated as far as in 1980-81 had not been approved....."

How much should I quote from the report? Para 25 says and I quote:

> "The Committee had observed that the proposal for a 6-MMTPA Grassroot Refinery in Eastern India had been hanging fire since August, 1989...."

You are promising something for the North-East, for the development of the North-East. Why do you make false promises? You have not approved these proposals since 1981. The Government is a continuity. And I am addressing the Government. What is this Government going to do? I am not here to hurl abuses on the Minister who has just assumed the charge of the Ministry.

Para 28 of the Report further says and I quote:

> "The committee are perturbed to note that in spite of their specific recommendaiton to complete all formalities in connection with approval of the Refinery Project in Eastern India within a period of 3 months from the date of presentation of the report, there has hardly been any progress made so far...."

I would also quote from para 29 of the Report:

> "It is further dishartening to find that even after six years, the Government is still dragging their feet with regard to the project....."

There are many things in this Report. I hope the hon. Minister will look into it and do something positive on the supply management side. There is one thing more in this very connetion. I went to Assam. Our Finance Committee went to Assam last year and there a representation was given to me by employees' federation there. They said, "Sir, we are thankful to the Ministry of Petroleum....." etc., etc. and, ".....the unit had to be kept idle after running it for four days for want of sufficient amount of crude oil". If a plant is closed or it is inoperative for want of supply of crude and you supply crude only for four days, is that the way your Ministry functions? This is the representation that they gave me. What are we going to do? This supply-management is one thing.

Another thing that you could have done is to reduce the duties. Why could you not reduce the duties, firstly? You froze or mobilised or used Rs. 4,000/- crores out of the Oil Pool Account. Now, all these concerns, the I.O.C., the O.N.G.C., etc. are commercial concerns. I make one point for your kind consideration. These are commercial concerns. If there is a deficit in the Oil Pool Account, heavens are not going to fall. There is so much of deficit in the Central Government but does it mean that we are going to tax people to the tune of Rs. 60,000/- crores? No. Deficits are there. So, if there was a deficit in these organisations in the Oil Pool Accounts, assume it for the sake of an argument, what should have been done? These commercial organisations are to be run on commercial lines. Then, they could have gone to the market and borrowed Rs. 10,000/- crores, paid interest at the rate of 12%, whcih, let us say, came to about Rs. 1,000/- crores or Rs. 1,200/- crores. Then, these companies could have been asked to pass on the maximum interest burden to the consumer saying that they had borrowed Rs. 10,000/- crores because there was no money in the Oil Pool Account; so, this is the interest that we were paying, that is, a thousand crores of rupees, and so, we pass on this burden to you. Instead of Rs. 10,000/- crores, you could have passed on only Rs. 1,000/- crores, which is three or four per cent rise. You could have met the situation. These commercial organisations borrow money from the market, as the Government of India borrows from the open market. The Government of India is also borrowing from the open market. It is not taking money from the Reserve Bank or the other banks. It is borrowing from the open market at the rate of 12% or 13% or even more than that. If the Government of India can borrow money

from the open market, why could these commercial organisations not be asked to borrow money from the market and pass on the interest burden—which could have been hardly 3 or 4%—to the consumer? Then, the people also would not have felt the pinch of all these steep hikes that you have done now, which are also unprecedented in the history of Independent India.

The other thing is that you are charging—and these are 1995-96 Budget figures—Rs. 2,666/- crores on account of Excise Duty on domestic crude, Rs. 3,800/- crores on account of Excise Duty on domestic petroleum products, Rs. 3,679/- crores on account of customs on imported crude, Rs 4,290/- crores on account of customs on imported products, Rs.500/- crores on account of royalty on offshore crude and Rs. 300/- crores on account of offshore natural gas. Now, the oil companies have paid dividend to the Government to the tune of Rs. 16,000/- crores and corporate taxes to the tune of about Rs. 1,000/- crores. The total comes to about Rs. 17,000/- crores. Include the taxes of the State Governments and it comes to about Rs. 28,000/- crores. The net sales of the POL—petroleum, oil and lubricants—are Rs. 55,000/- crores. The duties that you are charging — the Centre as well as the States' customs, excise and everything — come to Rs. 28,000/- crores. Could you not provide relief to the people by reducing these taxes, by foregoing these taxes? You did not go in for that option also. The cheapest option for you was the poor people of this country. I am sorry to say that you did not manage the matters in a proper way.

There is one thing more about the natural gas. Mr. Minister, do you know how much of natural gas flares up? In the 6th Plan (1980—85), the percentage of flaring of the gas was 39%. During the 7th Plan (1985—90), it was 32%. It is still continuing. Now practically one third of the natural gas is flaring up and we have not been able to control it. And, we are talking of globalisation! We are talking about integrating the Indian economy with the rest of the world economy in the name of globalisation, liberalisation and what not. You are doing what should not be done by you. So, why should the poor consumer of this country, whether he is a car-owner or a two-wheeler owner or a luna-owner or a three-wheeler owner or others should pay for your inefficiency and corruption? These hikes have been resorted to not because four thousand crore of rupees were withdrawan by you from the Oil Pool Account, as stated by the Prime Minister in your Parliamentary Party meeting. According to me, if Mr. Chidambaram had withdrawan or Dr. Manmohan Singh had withdrawan four thousand crore of rupees from the Oil Pool Account that is due from these oil companies, as honest leaders they must pay back that. You must demand that money from them and not complain of it because they had withdrawan it. If they had withdrawan it, the Finance Ministry with Mr. Chidambaram who is a constituent of your Government, why not get back that four thousand crore of rupees. That means you are acquiescing in the misappropriation of those four thousand crores of rupees raised by the previous regime. They can have no grudge.

SHRI ASHOK MITRA: Mr. Agarwal, between 1985—89, roughly twenty seven thousand crores of rupees were withdrawn from the Oil Account.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: That is all the more alarming. If the Government of India has been appropriating the service funds from the Oil Pool Account, it is absolutely dishonest on the part of the Government of India to keep it appropriated, it amounts to misappropriation. You must demand these. These commercial organisations must demand that money from the Finance Ministry; you debit their account; you realise that amount from them. As I suggested earlier, improve efficiency, remove corruption, take early decisions, update Perspective Plan 2007 and the Long Range Plan 2002 and then

look after the supply management side much better. Unless you do that, it will not be possible. You could have foregone some of these things.

Now you take domestic prices. The domestic price of petrol, inclusive of all taxes, is Rs. 32,894 per tonne whereas imported price, inclusive of all duties, is Rs. 11,255 per tonne. What a difference! You are charging duties and taxes like Excise Duty, Customs Duty, Sales Tax and octroi. That is why this burden has gone up. The price of Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) is 18,425... There is no need of a bell because my party's time is 29 minutes.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE) : Mr. Agarwal, it is 28 minutes.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL : I have just started.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE) : You have just started! You started at 2.58 p.m. and now it is 3.23.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL : Even then 25 minutes only.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE) : If you want to take the whole time of your party, you can go ahead.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL : My party is not going to object to it.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE) : Okay.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: So, the local ATF is 18,425 and imported is 5,556 per tonne. The prices in the international market had gone down from 32 dollars a barrel to 16 or 18 dollars a barrel. Even if they go down, you don't decrease the prices here. In one go you benefited all these petrol pump dealers who have petrol worth five lakhs of rupees by 33 per cent hike which means that they got a profit of about one-and-a-half lakhs of rupees. This is not going to help the consumer.

Lastly, Sir, as you have warned me, the Government is talking of the poor people. Do you know how much is the consumption of petrol and how much is the consumption of diesel? There is an article by Shri Prem Shankar Jha, a renowned journalist—everybody knows him—in which he says, I quote:

> "...There are now many more consumers of gasoline in the country than of diesel. The consumption of gasoline is admittedly only a little over five million tonnes against more than 30 million tonnes of High Speed Diesel Oil. But they plea that gasoline as a rich man's fuel is long out of place."

Don't be under this impression. If you really want to tax the rich, then I have got a paper with regard to zero-tax liability companies whose profits have gone up more than one thousand crores of rupees. More than one thousand crore of rupees!

I have got that particular list. I do not want to read out all the names in the list. There are big shots, industrialists. They may be very poor people living below the poverty line in your eyes. They are very much there. Essar Gujarat, National Aluminium, Tata Chemicals, Tata Iron & Steel, Nagarjun, Great Eastern Shipping, Century Textiles, Chambal Fertilizers, BSES, Gujarat State Fertilisers, Gujarat Ambuja, Jaiprakash Industries, Madras Refineries, Gujarat Narmada Valley, Essar Shipping, Arvind Mills, Texmaco, Hindustan Zinc, Ashok Leyland, North Steel, CESE, Southern Petrochemicals, Reliance Industries, SAIL, etc., etc. There are many. Their profits are more than a thousand crore rupees!

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Reliance tops the list. They are enjoying the political patronage of the successive Governments.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I have made no exception. As I have said, the names are readily available with me. Profits of Reliance are Rs. 1064 crores. Tax liability is zero. Net profit is Rs. 1,064 crores. Profits of Essar Gujarat are Rs. 3,597 crores. Net is the same. No tax

liability. These are all zero tax liability companies. There are many more. If you levy corporate tax of say 45% or 40% or even 30% you get a lot of money to make up the losses that you are going to incur on account if inefficiency and corruption. Why do not you go to these people? Why do not you levy minimum tax on these zero tax liability companies? Are they poor? Are they farmers? Are they agriculturists? Are they agricultural labourers? Who are they? Are they your financiers? Who are they, after all? Why are you exempting them? Why do you not charge minimum corporate tax from everybody whosoever makes profits including export earners? I say so. If you do so, it will be social justice. It is not social justice if you levy on those poor people who are salary earners going to their offices on two-wheelers. Two-wheelers or three-wheelers are very minor things. Even ladies, generally, go on Luna. Madam, you must be knowing. Ladies generally go on Luna. They do not use even scooters—they do not afford. There are certain new scooters for ladies now. Generally they go on Luna. You must, hereafter, stop the practice of cross subsidisation and you must clearly understand the contents of the report of Sundararajan Committee. You can take decisions on what it has recommended. Matters are pending for eight years, nine years. Since 1980-81 the Haldia Refinery case is pending. For sixteen years! You can see the report of the Public Accounts Committee, the Public Sector Undertakings Committee, the Plan and Programme Implementation Committee—projects lagging behind for many years. The cost and time overruns are eating into the vitals of our economy apart from corruption, inefficiency, dishonesty, defaults, and misappropriation. This is one of the factors which is eating into the vitals of our economy.

If you take decisions on that...(*Interruptions*)..

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Wasteful expenditure!

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Rs. 40 crores is due to ministers' flights, special flights, chartered flights. It has come in a newspaper.

There are many more things. You can do something to give immediate relief to the people. Withdraw this measure and resolve to levy taxes on zero tax liability companies, improve efficiency and remove corruption. Do supply management properly. Do not curb the demand. In a developing economy the demand has to go up. You know the per capita consumption in our country. Lastly, I am going to give only one figure and that is all. It was 137 in the '80's. It has gone up to 243 Kg per capita energy used. That is the oil equivalent to in 1994. In Pakistan, it is 255; much more than us! Why Pakistan's figure is much more than India? I am not talking of China. It is 647. This is the country which is more prosperous and progressed. Energy is vital for our economic growth. I have not touched the availability of electricity. Why do not you provide electricity to all villages? Why should they depend on wood? Why should they depend on lanterns? They do not need kerosene. Kerosene is mixed up and adulterated with diesel and petrol. All these petrol dealers and diesel dealers are becoming rich. Kerosene is being adulterated in the rural areas. People do not understand this; people do not know it. People have found out many new ways. They give some injection to the cow, and there is adulteration in milk and *ghee* also. People are bringing gold in silver bars from which gold can be separated later on. The Customs people have seized so many such bars at Bombay. You can put gold in silver bars and then import these silver bars by paying a very low duty in comparison to gold. Therefore, there are new methods which are being devised by cheats all over the country. Please, beware of them. Take some positive steps; withdraw these hikes completely. If you want alternative resources, then levy tax on zero-tax companies; bring efficiency and move corruption. This is where the solution lies. Thank you very much.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Thank you, Agarwalji. Now, Shri Som Palji.

श्री सोमपाल (उत्तर प्रदेश): धन्यवाद उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया। जिस दिन से पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों के मूल्यों में सरकार ने वृद्धि की है, विपक्ष के लोगों ने ही नहीं बल्कि हमारे समर्थक और दुर्भाग्य से हमारे सहयोगी दलों ने भी इतनी आलोचना, नजदीक के इतिहास में शायद किसी बात की नहीं की हो, जितनी इस बात की की है। मुख्य तौर से उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, इस मूल्य वृद्धि की तीन बातों में आलोचना की गयी है। पहली तो यह कि यह मूल्य वृद्धि क्यों की गयी? दूसरे, इतनी ज्यादा मूल्य वृद्धि क्यों की गयी और तीसरे यह कि जब सदन का सत्र आना ही था तो उसके ठीक पूर्व क्यों की गयी? सदन के सत्र में यह बजट के समय क्यों नहीं की गयी? इन तीन के अतिरिक्त और कोई आलोचना सुनने को नहीं मिली। मैं प्रयास करुंगा कि इन तीनों आलोचनाओं का बिन्दुवार उत्तर दे दूं।

पहली बात तो यह कि एक दिन पहले भी बहुत संक्षेप में चर्चा हुई थी और उस समय मैंने बहुत संक्षेप में टिप्पणी इन तीन बातों के संबंध में अपनी ओर से दी थी। हमें यह समझ लेना चाहिए और यह हमारे जीवन का कटु सत्य है कि पैट्रोलियम पदार्थ हमारे देश में ज्यादा पैदा नहीं होता, उसकी पैदावार बढ़ायी जानी चाहिए। पर वह तो एक दीर्घकालीन उपाय है, उसके लिए जितने संसाधनों की आवश्यकता है, वर्तमान में वह हमारे पास उपलब्ध नहीं है और यदि उपलब्ध हो भी जाएं तो उसकी आकस्मिक वृद्धि करना असंभव है। उसमें समय लगता है। तो तथ्य यह है कि यह पैट्रोलियम पदार्थ अधिकतर आयात किये जाते है और आयात करने में विदेशी मुद्रा देनी पड़ती है, यह कहीं से मुफ्त में नहीं मिलते। जहां तक इसके भार का प्रश्न है, वह पूरे राष्ट्र को उठाना पड़ता है, प्रत्येक नागरिक का उत्तरदायित्व है, यह महत्वपूर्ण चीज है। पिछले वर्ष सारे पैट्रोलियम पदार्थ जो आयातित किए गये, उनके ऊपर 22,000 करोड़ रुपये की विदेशी मुद्रा खर्च हुई। जितना हमने सारा निर्यात किया और निर्यात करने से जितनी आय हमें प्राप्त हुई, उसका 20 प्रतिशत इन पदार्थों के आयात में लगा और यदि इस वर्ष यह वृद्धि नहीं की जाती तो देश में पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों की उपलब्धता बनाए रखना संभव नहीं था। इस प्रकार के संकट में और अपनी अदूरदर्शिता के कारण, कुप्रबंध के कारण हमारी पूर्व सरकार ने लगभग एक वर्ष पहले देश को ऐसे गंभीर संकट में डाल दिया था। उस वक्त पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों की उपलब्धता को बनाए रखने में वह सरकार सफल नहीं रही। लगभग वैसी स्थिति में देश जाने वाला था। यह सब जानते हैं कि 8 प्रतिशत से ज्यादा प्रतिवर्ष इसकी मांग में वृद्धि होती थी। तो आयात का यह बिल 25 हजार करोड़ हो जाना था, यह संसाधन हम कहां से लाते? यह महत्वपूर्ण है। ऐसा नहीं है कि विपक्ष के लोग इस बात को जानते नहीं हैं। यह बात भी नहीं है कि हमारे समर्थक दल नहीं जानते...।

श्री साल्वे जी बैठे हैं, चव्हाण जी बैठे हैं, नारायणसामी जी बैठे हैं, ये भी इस तथ्य को भली प्रकार से जानते हैं कि अगर संसाधन जुटाने होते हैं तो यह वृद्धि करनी पड़ती है।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Sompalji, will you just yield for a minute please. May I request the hon. Members to speak a little softly, then the reporters will be able to right down correctly. Thank you.

श्री सोमपाल: अभी एक परिचर्चा टेलीविजन और रेडियो पर हुई थी कि संसद में क्या मुद्दे आने है? उस समय मेरे साथ दूसरे दलों के वरिष्ठ साथी कम्युनिस्ट पार्टी, कम्युनिस्ट मार्क्सवादी पार्टी और भारतीय जनता पार्टी के थे, मेरे से सीनियर थे और उस समय भी मैंने यह बात कही थी तथा उलटे उनसे प्रश्न पूछा था कि यदि आप यहां सरकार में होते तो आप क्या करते? मैं दावे के साथ कह सकता हूं कि आपको भी यही करना पड़ता। मैं माननीय अग्रवाल जी का ध्यान आकर्षित करना चाहूंगा क्योंकि आपने यह कहा है कि मुझे पता है कि यह मूल्य वृद्धि वापस नहीं हो सकती। मैं आपका समर्थन करना चाहता हूं मैं यह कहना चाहता हूं कि आप भी आते तो आप भी यही करते, आप इसे वापस नहीं करते, आप भी इतनी ही मूल्य वृद्धि करते।

मैं दूसरा तथ्य तेल के संबंध में आपके ध्यान में लाना चाहता हूं, वैसे तो यह अनावश्यक था क्योंकि आप दोनों बातें जानते ही हैं कि तेल का आयात करना पड़ता है, इसके लिए संसाधनों की आवश्यकता है और इसके लिए मूल्य वृद्धि करनी पड़ती है। मैं जो यह बात कहने जा रहा हूं यह भी आपकी जानकारी में है कि तेल कम्पनियों का जो पूल अकाउन्ट है, जो संयुक्त खाता है वह स्वयं संतुलनीय खाता है। उसको अपने संसाधन स्वयं पैदा करने पड़ते हैं, उसे बजट की तरफ से कोई समर्थन प्राप्त नहीं है। इसलिए उसमें जो भी घाटा या बाधा होती है वह उसको स्वयं वहन करना पड़ता है।

यह सेल्फ बेलेंशिंग अकाउन्ट है, इसको अपने रिसोर्सिस प्रोड्यूस करने पड़ते हैं और यही कारण है कि कुछ चीजों के मूल्य ज्यादा रखने पड़ते हैं और कुछ के कम रखने पड़ते हैं। राष्ट्र पर या आम आदमी पर भारत की बात नहीं है। यह मैं पहले ही कह चुका हूं कि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के ऊपर राष्ट्र के विकास का, राष्ट्र के लिए संसाधन मुहैया कराने का भार है। विशेषकर जब वह आयातित संसाधन हो तो प्रत्येक नागरिक पर उसका भार पड़ता है। तेल आवश्यक वस्तु है। एक उत्तरदायी सरकार होने के नाते, एक रेस्पान्सेबिल गवर्नमेंट होने के नाते उसे यह निर्णय लेना पड़ा, नहीं तो इसकी सप्लाई बरकरार रखना या आपूर्ति करना सम्भव नहीं था। यदि आप भी होते तो आपको भी यही करना पड़ता। परन्तु सरकार का यह भी उत्तरदायित्व है कि वह ध्यान में रखे कि समाज की, देश की, उसकी जनसंख्या की, उसके नागरिकों की, उसकी अर्थ-व्यवस्था के विभिन्न वर्गों की इस भार को वहन करने की कितनी क्षमता है? इस बात को ध्यान में रखते हुए यह निर्णय लिया गया कि मिट्टी के तेल के दाम नहीं बढ़ाये जायेंगे। यह भी निर्णय लिया गया कि डीजल के मूल्य के ऊपर जो 30 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि की गई है, उस वृद्धि में से 50 प्रतिशत मूल्य वृद्धि वापस कर ली जाये और इसे 15 प्रतिशत वृद्धि के ऊपर सीमित कर दिया गया। क्योंकि उसका प्रभाव कृषि क्षेत्र के ऊपर पड़ता और कृषि क्षेत्र के ऊपर पड़ने का परिणाम यह होता कि खाद्य पदार्थों के दाम बढ़ जाते तथा कृषि से उत्पादित कच्ची वस्तुओं के दाम बढ़ जाते और खाद्यान्न के दाम बढ़ने के कारण मजदूरी में वृद्धि होती, वेतन में वृद्धि होती।

SHRI H. HANUMANTHAPPA (Karnataka): You are arguing that it is beneficial to the farmers. What is the percentage of farmers are using diesel? It is only 30 per cent; not even 30 per cent. The other 60 to 80 per cent of the farmers have to bear the brunt of this. आप बार-बार कह रहे हैं कि यदि आप होते तो यही करते, तो आप भी यहां बैठकर वही आलोचना करते थे। इसका जवाब दीजिए।

SHRI SOM PAL: Madam, hon. Member Shri Hanumanthappa has very rightly said this. This reversal of roles is not uncommon to the parliamentary system. I accept this. But I quickly expect him to accept the fact of life.

So far as the diesel prices are concerned, your statement says that thirty per cent farmers use it. But it is only those thirty per cent farmers who are producing the marketable surplus and it is only the marketable surplus which will reflect into the price level of the country. ...(*Interruptions*)... Let me meet your argument. Please bear with me. Is it not a fact of life that only thirty per cent of the farmers who were using diesel based machinery are producing marketable surplus? In regard to agriculture I can talk on any issue. May be, in petroleum, I am not an expert. But in agriculture, please beware before challenging me. It is this thirty per cent people who are producing the marketable surplus; it is only that surplus which goes into the market which hits the people who have to buy food items and other essential items. And it is that section of production, that chunk of production which goes to affect the general price level and the inflation. Therefore, we were cautious to roll back the fifty per cent increase in diesel price. It is my argument and I think you will agree with me.

दूसरी बात यह है कि दूसरा प्रभाव डीजल का सार्वजनिक परिवहन प्रणाली के ऊपर पड़ता है। सार्वजनिक परिवहन यातायात प्रणाली जो गरीबों द्वारा इस्तेमाल की जाती है, जिनके पास कार नहीं है, जिनके पास स्कूटर नहीं है, जिनके पास सुनिश्चित आय के साधन नहीं हैं, जो सरकारी बसों और सार्वजनिक परिवहन प्रणाली को प्रायः यूज करते हैं, अपने काम करने के स्थान पर जाने के लिए या दूसरे स्थानों पर जाने के लिए, उनके जीवन के व्यय के ऊपर असर पड़ता है इसलिए डीजल की प्राइस कम की। मैं अपनी बात पूरी करते हुए इन बिन्दुओं के ऊपर यह कहना चाहता हूं कि एक उत्तरदायी सरकार होने के नाते हमारी सरकार ने दाम बढ़ाये क्योंकि हमें सप्लाई बरकरार रखनी थी और एक संवेदनशील सरकार होने के नाते, एक रिस्पोन्सेबिल गवर्नमेंट होने के नाते हमने यह देखा कि कौन से वर्ग इस भार को कितना वहन कर सकते हैं, जो नहीं कर सकते थे उनके दाम हमने कम रखे, जो कर सकते थे उनके दाम हमने बढ़ाये। इसी से संबंधित एक और बात कहना चाहता हूं कि उर्वरकों के ऊपर राहत हमने पुनः स्थापित की है, हम उसको दुबारा ले आये हैं। उसके दो

कारण हैं एक तो खाद्यान्न के उत्पादन पर, कृषि द्वारा दूसरे कच्चे माल के उत्पादन पर, कुप्रभाव पड़ रहा था, जो पहली सरकार थी उसने सस्ती लोकप्रियता प्राप्त करने के लिए और किसान की कमजोरी जानते हुए कि उसकी जानकारी उतनी वैज्ञानिक नहीं है जितनी पढ़े-लिखे लोगों की है या दूसरे लोगों की होती है, वह जो भी सस्ता उर्वरक उपलब्ध होगा उसका इस्तेमाल करेगा, जो नाइट्रोजन के उर्वरक हैं, नाइट्रोजन्स फर्टिलाइजर्स, उनका अधिक इस्तेमाल करता है तो उनके ऊपर इन्होंने सब्सिडी बरकरार रखी और पोटाश और फास्फेटिक फर्टिलाइजर के ऊपर सब्सिडी खत्म कर दी। हम इन दोनों उर्वरकों के ऊपर सब्सिडी दुबारा ले आये हैं। उसका एक और कारण है जो भौतिक और वैज्ञानिक अधिक है, आर्थिक और राजनीतिक बिल्कुल नहीं है, वह यह है कि भूमि की उर्वरक शक्ति के ऊपर उसका कुप्रभाव पड़ रहा था, पर्यावरण के ऊपर उसका कुप्रभाव पड़ रहा था, जो लोग कृषि विज्ञान को जानते हैं वे इस बात को समझते हैं कि नत्रजन की अधिक विद्यमानता वातावरण में कीड़े और बीमारियां पैदा करती हैं, जल को दूषित करती हैं, वायु को दूषित करती हैं और मृदा की उर्वरकता में असंतुलन पैदा करती हैं, इसलिए हमने फास्फेटिक और नाइट्रोजन्स फर्टिलाइजर पर सब्सिडी देना दुबारा तय किया है। कांग्रेस की सरकार ने यह निश्चित रूप से राजनीतिक कारणों से किया था, मैं यह आरोप लगाना चाहता हूं, आक्षेप लगाना चाहता हूं। ...(**व्यवधान**) और उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, भूलें हम सुधारेंगे, इस कांग्रेस की सरकार की।....(**व्यवधान**)

THE VICE CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Would you like to stop for a minute because the hon. Member wants to say something?

डॉ० नौनिहाल सिंह (उत्तर प्रदेश): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, माननीय मेम्बर ने यह कहा कि फार सर्टेन रीजन्स इस को घटाया है। Does it not prove that the Government has lacked pre-thinking or advance thinking? After the protests they have lowered the price which they had enhanced.

श्री सोमपाल: यह बात हम डा० नौनिहाल सिंह जी की अगर मान भी लें तो कोई हर्ज नहीं। कभी अगर कोई किसी बात को ध्यान में लाता है तो हम उसके लिए रिस्पांसिव है, संवेदनशील हैं। जो आशा थी किसान की, ग्रामीण समुदाय की, उसके प्रति हम अपना उत्तरदायित्व तो महसूस करते हैं। अगर बाद में भी किया तो कोई हर्ज नहीं है।

श्री महेश्वर सिंह: आप वकील अच्छे हैं लेकिन केस खराब है।

श्री सोमपाल: अब रही कैरोसीन की बात। ईंधन, रसोई गैस की वृद्धि के ऊपर बहुत शोर मचाया जा रहा है कि आम आदमी के ऊपर इसका असर पड़ा है। नारायणसामी जी चले गए। उनके वक्तव्य से यह बात सिद्ध है कि केवल एक करोड़ रसोई गैस के कनैक्शन भारत में हैं। अगर यह सर्वेक्षण कराया जाए, आंकड़े मेरे पास नहीं हैं, अगर इसे ढूंढने की कोशिश की जाए तो बहुत बड़े रोचक तथ्य सामने आयेंगे कि कितने लोग भारत भर में रसोई गैस का इस्तेमाल करते हैं। सारे भारत में जो एक करोड़ कनेक्शन हैं, उनमें शहरों में कितने हैं और गांवों में कितने हैं, निश्चित आय वर्ग वालों के पास कितने हैं, असंगठित क्षेत्र वालों के पास कितने हैं और मजदूरों के पास कितने हैं, आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में कितने हैं और पर्वतीय क्षेत्रों में कितने हैं, ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में कितने हैं तथा शहरों की गंदी बस्तियों में कितने हैं। लेकिन एक आंकड़ा तो सबके समक्ष है जिस पर दो-तीन दिन से चर्चा हो रही है कि 40 प्रतिशत गरीबी की रेखा के नीचे रहने वाले लोगों के क्षेत्रों में कोई एल०पी०जी० का डिपो उपलब्ध नहीं है। उनको यहां खोलने की गुंजाइश ही नहीं है, उनकी एक्सेसेबिलिटी ही नहीं है। 1989-90 में एक सर्वेक्षण हमारी सरकार ने कराया था, जिसमें यह तथ्य सामने आया था कि आदिवासी क्षेत्रों में वनों में रहने वाले लोगों का 90 प्रतिशत समय, बच्चों का भी और युवकों का भी, ईंधन इकट्ठा करने और पानी 10-10 किलोमीटर क्षेत्र से लाने में लग जाता है। एममूर्ति कमेटी की रिपोर्ट में यह तथ्य सामने आए थे कि यदि वहां पर स्कूल भी खोल दिए जाएं तो उनके पास समय ही नहीं है कि वह वहां आ सकें। वह तो एल०पी०जी० का इस्तेमाल नहीं कर सकते। उनके पास सिलेंडर खरीदने के लिए पैसे नहीं हैं और न गैस खरीदने के लिए पैसे हैं और न वहां एजेंसीज हैं। तो सवाल इस बात का आता है और आप बार-बार कहते हैं कि कामन मैन के ऊपर, आम आदमी के ऊपर इसका प्रभाव पड़ा है। आम आदमी की परिभाषा क्या है? क्या आप इन 40 प्रतिशत लोगों को आम आदमी मानते हैं? आप जो झुग्गी-झोपड़ियों में रहते हैं उनको आप आदमी मानते हैं, या आम आदमी की परिभाषा आपकी यह है कि जो कार इस्तेमाल करते हैं, स्कूटर इस्तेमाल करते हैं, एल०पी०जी० इस्तेमाल करते हैं, जिनके सुनिश्चित आय के साधन हैं और जिनको शहरी या औद्योगिक सुविधायें उपलब्ध हैं? आपकी आम आदमी की परिभाषा क्या है? हमारी आम आदमी की परिभाषा यह है कि जो इन चीजों

को पाने के लिए सक्षम नहीं हैं उनके प्रति हमारी अधिक जिम्मेदारी है। आज भी 62 रुपये प्रति सिलेंडर पर सब्सिडी दी जाती है। यह भी सत्य है कि यह ईंधन, एल०पी०जी० सबसे सस्ती और सबसे सुविधाजनक ईंधन है। आप लकड़ी को ले लीजिए, लकड़ी को इकट्ठा करने के लिए जो मजदूरी है, जो वह श्रम करता है, इसके लिए कितनी कठिनाई और उत्पीड़न उनका होता है, इसकी अगर आप कीमत लगायें तो यह इससे सैकड़ों गुना महंगा पड़ता है। वे लोग बहुत सौभाग्यशाली हैं, एक निश्चित कीमत पर फोन करके ही जिन्हें यह ईंधन उपलब्ध हो जाता है। जिनको यह सुविधा उपलब्ध नहीं है उनको मैं आम आदमी मानता हूं।

अब पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों और पेट्रोल में वृद्धि की बात है। मैं पूछना चाहता हूं कि पेट्रोल कितने लोग इस्तेमाल करते हैं? कुछ आंकड़े मैं आपके समक्ष प्रस्तुत करना चाहूंगा। 65 प्रतिशत गांव हमारे देश में ऐसे हैं जहां पांच किलोमीटर तक सड़क नहीं है। वहां पेट्रोल का उपयोग करने का सवाल ही नहीं उठता। 1991 की जनगणना के अनुसार 74.3 प्रतिशत जनसंख्या हमारे देश की ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में रहती है। उनमें से 65 प्रतिशत के पास पांच किलोमीटर तक सड़क नहीं है। तो वहां पेट्रोल इस्तेमाल करने का प्रश्न ही नहीं उठता। अर्थ यह हुआ कि लगभग 50 प्रतिशत लोग ऐसे हैं जो पेट्रोल पदार्थों का इस्तेमाल करने की क्षमता ही नहीं रखते। पेट्रोल बड़े-बड़े शहरों में इस्तेमाल होता है जहां कारें, एक-एक कार नहीं बल्कि एक आदमी के पास तीन-तीन कारें हैं, एक परिवार के पास एक नहीं, आठ-आठ, दस-दस कारें हैं, अगर वे इससे प्रभावित होते हैं तो उनको होने दीजिए। उनकी क्षमता इस भार को वहन करने की है। गरीबों के ऊपर इसका कोई असर पड़ने वाला नहीं है।

अग्रवाल जी ने एक महत्वपूर्ण बात टैक्सेज की कही। इसके वित्तीय प्रबंधन के संबंध में उन्होंने जो कहा, मैं इसमें उनसे सहमत हूं। इस बिन्दु पर मैं बाद में आऊंगा। एक दूसरा सवाल है। पहला मैंने यह बताया कि वृद्धि क्यों करनी पड़ी। दूसरी आलोचना यह की गई कि इतनी क्यों की गई। पहले तो मैं यह कहना चाहता हूं कि यह तथ्य भी आपकी जानकारी में है और जानकारी होते हुए भी दुर्भाग्य यह है कि विपक्ष के लोग भी, समर्थक दल भी और हमारे सहयोगी दल भी इस तथ्य को, कटु सत्य को अनदेखा करते हैं, निश्चित रूप से राजनीतिक कारणों से। पिछले तीन वर्षों में जो चरणबद्ध वृद्धि होनी चाहिए थी, फेज्ड में इनक्रीज होनी चाहिये थी, उसको लटका कर रखा है। पहली सरकार के इस एक और कुप्रबंध का नुकसान हमारी सरकार को उठाना पड़ रहा है। इसका एक हिस्टोरिकल रीज़न है। 30 महीने से फाइल दबी पड़ी थी। बीच में बी०जे०पी० की सरकार आई। इनके माननीय प्रधान मंत्री जी के फाइल पर आदेश हैं कि बढ़ाया जाना चाहिये और अब यही लोग आलोचना कर रहे हैं। अगर कोई बात दोमुंही हुई है तो वह आपकी तरफ से ज्यादा है, हमारी तरफ से नहीं। हमने एक सीधा, सच्चा, कड़वा निर्णय लिया। यह हमारी विवशता थी, देश की विवशता थी।

दूसरी बात यह है कि अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाज़ार में पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों के मूल्यों में वृद्धि हुई, उसको कौन वहन करता? मैंने कहा कि वहां एक्सेस दा काउंटर मिलता है, कैश देना पड़ता है। जो तेल कंपनियां, तेल वाहक जहाज़ हमारे लिए तेल ले कर आते हैं उन्हें चलाने वाले कुछ मर्चेंट नेवी के लोगों से जो कमर्शियल लाइनर्स हैं, उनसे हमारी बात हुई। उन्होंने बताया कि जो दुर्गति भारत के तेल लाने वाले जहाज़ों की होती है उन्हें हफ्तों-हफ्तों प्रतीक्षा करनी पड़ती है क्योंकि हमारा पैसा पहले जमा नहीं होता। जब तक संसाधन नहीं होंगे तो बाजार में आपकी यही दुर्गति होती है। बाज़ार में कोई किसी का संबंधी नहीं है, कोई रिश्तेदार नहीं होता है, किसी को कोई कनसेशन नहीं देता है। जो पैसा जा कर जमा कर देगा दुकानदार उसको पहले अटेंड करेगा। यह एक शाश्वत जीवन मूल्य है और सार्वभौमिक तथ्य है। हमें इसको मानना पड़ेगा। अगर हमारे पास संसाधन नहीं होते तो तेल की सप्लाई बाहर से नहीं मिलती और अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाज़ार में मूल्यों में वृद्धि के कारण भी वह वृद्धि करनी पड़ी।

तीसरा कारण यह है कि यह जो विदेशी मुद्रा का दाम है हमारे रुपये के अनुपात में बढ़ता है। यह बहुत महत्वपूर्ण बात अग्रवाल जी ने उठाई। पर इसका एक और दूसरा समग्र आर्थिक और राजनीतिक कारण है। उसका तेल खाते से अकेले से संबंध नहीं है। इसके संदर्भ में मैं यह अपील करना चाहूंगा कि इसको भी एक तथ्य मानना चाहिये क्योंकि इस विदेशी विनिमय में और इससे अनुपातिक कीमतों में जो परिवर्तन होता है, उसका भार भी हमको वहन करना पड़ेगा। एक अन्य कारण यह भी रहा है। अंतर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर पर विदेशी मुद्रा का भाव बढ़ना, तेल पदार्थों का भाव बढ़ना और इतने दिनों तक इसको पेंडिंग रखना, यह तीन मुख्य कारण रहे इतनी बड़ी वृद्धि करने के। यह मेरा इसके संबंध में उत्तर है।

अब रही आयल पूल अकाऊंट के फंड के डाइवर्शन की बात और इसकी राशियों को अन्यत्र उपयोग करने की

बात। यह माननीय साल्वे जी भी उठायेंगे। इनको ज्यादा अधिक अधिकारिक जानकारी होगी सरकार की कि यह दूसरे कामों में लिया गया। मैं चाहूंगा और अपनी सरकार से आग्रह करना चाहूंगा कि इस सदन के समक्ष यह सारे तथ्य पेश करें। यह जांच की जाए कि किन कारणों से इन राशियों को दूसरी जगह डाइवर्ट किया गया और कितनी राशियां भेजी गई, उनका क्या उपयोग हुआ, क्या उनको यहां रखना अधिक आवश्यक उपयोग था या सस्ते पेट्रोलियम पदार्थ उपलब्ध करना अधिक आवश्यक था और क्या प्राथमिकता थी, क्या विवशता थी? यह सब तथ्य सदन के सामने आने चाहियें और देश के सामने आने चाहिये। प्रत्येक नागरिक को अधिकार है कि वह उसको जाने।

तीसरी बात यह कि यह इस समय क्यों किया गया, यह मैं पहले कह चुका हूं कि—

Oil Pool Account is a self-balancing account. It has no connection whatsoever with the Budget. There is no budgetary support available to the Oil Pool Account.

यह प्रशासित मूल्यों में वृद्धि की है। बजट से इसका कोई संबंध नहीं है। अगर टेक्सेज़ में बढ़ोत्तरी के कारण मूल्यों में वृद्धि होती तो बजट में रिफ्लेक्ट होनी चाहिये थी। मैं आपकी आलोचना मान लेता कि सदन से पहले किया है। अगर सदन का सत्रावसान हो जाता उसके तुरंत बाद करते तो आलोचना की जा सकती थी। हम कोई तथ्य छिपाना नहीं चाहते हैं। सब के सामने सारे तथ्य रखना चाहते हैं। उसी का परिणाम है कि आज एक खुली बहस यहां पर इसके ऊपर हो रही है, सारे दृष्टिकोण यहां आ रहे हैं। अगर कोई रचनात्मक बात जैसे अग्रवाल जी ने कही, टेक्स के बारे में कही, आयल पूल फंड्ज़ अकाऊंट्स मेनेजमेंट की बात कही या उनका कुप्रबंध क्यों किया गया या उन राशियों को अन्यत्र क्यों भेजा गया, इन सारे सवालों के ऊपर एक गम्भीर चर्चा और विशद विचार हो और उचित निर्णय होने चाहिएं, मैं इसका स्वागत करता हूं।

वित्तीय प्रबंधन के बाद कराधान के ढांचे में सुधार की बात कही गयी है। मैं पुनः निवेदन करना चाहता हूं पूरे सदन से, सरकार से, विपक्षी सदस्यों से कि पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों के ऊपर जिस प्रकार कर लगाए गए हैं यदि उसमें सुधार करने से कुछ मूल्यों में सुधार आ सकता है .....(समय की घंटी) एक मिनट और, आई एम कंक्ल्यूडिंग... तो उनके ऊपर अवश्य रचनात्मक दृष्टिकोण से विचार किया जाना चाहिए और पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों के उपयोग पर एक बहुत महत्वपूर्ण बात मेरे मित्र कहने जा रहे हैं सी०पी०आई०(एम) के, इसलिए मैं इसके ऊपर विषद चर्चा नहीं करता, यह विषय मैं उनके लिए छोड़ देता हूं। पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों के उपयोग की बचत की बात एक दीर्घकालीन उपाय है। एक मानसिक संरचना को बदलने की बात है उसके लिए एक वातावरण निर्माण करने की बात है। मैं इसके पक्ष में हूं। पर इसमें सबको सहयोग करना पड़ेगा। प्रत्येक नागरिक को एक अनुशासन अपने ऊपर लाना पड़ेगा और उसके लिए दो तीन सुझाव मैं अवश्य देना चाहूंगा बहुत संक्षेप में। एक तो सार्वजनिक परिवहन प्रणाली को सुदृढ़ करना और बेहतर बनाना इसके लिए बहुत आवश्यक है क्योंकि जब सार्वजनिक परिवहन प्रणाली सुदृढ़ होती है, सक्षम होती है और वह अच्छा काम करती है तो निश्चित रूप से निजी वाहनों के प्रयोग की आवश्यकता नहीं पड़ती है। दिल्ली में पिछले दिनों हमने देखा कि जब दिल्ली परिवहन की पर्याप्त संख्या में बसें चलती थीं उस समय कार्यालयों में जाने वाले, औद्योगिक बस्तियों में जाने वाले और उपनगरों में रहने वाले लोगों ने स्कूटरों का प्रयोग करना बंद कर दिया था। तो सार्वजनिक परिवहन प्रणाली को सुदृढ़ किया जाना बहुत आवश्यक है। दूसरा, औद्योगिक बस्तियों का, सरकारी कार्यालयों का, और निजी कार्यालयों का काम करने का समय सुबह प्रारंभ होता है और शाम को बंद करने का होता है, इसको स्टैगर करके, इसको भिन्न-भिन्न करके भी इस बात को किया जा सकता है, पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों की बचत की जा सकती है क्योंकि उतनी ही बसें, उतने ही परिवहन के संसाधन अधिक व्यक्तियों को ले जा सकते हैं। जर्मनी, जापान जैसे देशों में मैंने यह पढ़ा है कि वहां जब औद्योगिक बस्तियों में काम शुरू होता है तो 25 या 30 प्रतिशत औद्योगिक इकाइयां 7 बजे काम शुरू करेंगी, दूसरी 8 बजे करेंगी और तीसरी 9 बजे करेंगी। अगर इस प्रकार का उपाय यहां किया जा सकता हो तो उतनी संख्या की बसें जो बीच के समय में खाली रहती हैं वे उतने ही यात्रियों को या अधिक यात्रियों को ढो सकती है और पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों में बचत की जा सकती है। ये कोई नयी बातें नहीं हैं। इसी प्रकार ऊर्जा और बिजली में बचत की बात है, वह भी इसी प्रकार की जाती है क्योंकि जब औद्योगिक बस्तियों में एक ही समय सब इकाइयों का स्विच आन होगा तो अधिक दबाव पड़ता है विद्युत प्रणाली के ऊपर। अगर इस समय में परिवर्तन कर दिया जाए, इसको स्टैगर कर दिया जाए एक-एक घंटा तो उसमें भी बचत की जा सकती है। चुंगी और जो दूसरे अवरोध हैं जो ज्यादातर राजमार्गों के ऊपर हैं उनमें कमी करके बचत की जा सकती है। एक अध्ययन के

अनुसार एक ट्रक दिल्ली से लेकर कलकत्ता 8 या 9 दिन ले लेता है इन रुकावटों के कारण, अगर ये रुकावटें समाप्त कर दी जाएं तो 5 दिन में वह चला जाता है। परिणाम यह होगा कि जितने अभी ट्रक्स हैं उससे 40 प्रतिशत कम ट्रक्स या उतनी ही ट्रकों द्वारा 40 प्रतिशत अधिक माल ढो सकते हैं और पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों की बचत की जा सकती है। ऊर्जा के उपयोग पर एक आडिट लाने की बात है वह हमारे मित्र कहेंगे और मैं पहले ही उनका समर्थन करूंगा क्योंकि मैं उनका विचार इसी समय जानता हूं और आपसे निवेदन करूंगा कि उसको ध्यान से करें। तीसरी और अंतिम बात, कि जितने भी कृषि उत्पादन को बेचने वाली और खरीद फरोख्त करने वाली मण्डियां हैं और कृषि उत्पादन का भंडार करने वाले जो भंडार हैं जो स्टोर्स हैं जो वेयर हाउसेज हैं जो कोल्ड स्टोरेजेज हैं, मैं सरकार से निवेदन करना चाहूंगा और हमारी कृषि समिति ने भी एक महत्वपूर्ण संस्तुति इस में की थी कि उनके स्थानीयकरण को कानूनन ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों के लिए सुनिश्चित कर देना चाहिए क्योंकि वहीं तो ये चीजे पैदा होती हैं जैसे गेहूं है, प्रोक्योरमेंट का सीजन आता है उस समय वह वहीं के भंडार में भेज दिया जाए और वर्ष भर में आवश्यकता के अनुसार देश के दूसरे भागों में भेजा जाए। इससे शहर की महंगी भूमि के ऊपर दबाव कम पड़ेगा, यातायात के ऊपर पड़ने वाला आकस्मिक दबाव कम पड़ेगा, शहर में भागने की प्रवृति कम होगी। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में रोजगार बढ़ेगा, वहां आय बढ़ेगी और ईंधन में बचत होगी। इसके साथ ही मैं उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, अपनी बात समाप्त करता हूं। बहुत धन्यवाद।

डा० महेश चन्द्र शर्मा (राजस्थान): माननीय सदस्य ने एक तथ्य अभी-अभी कहा है, मैं पहली बार खड़ा हुआ हूं...

उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): आप बोलने वाले हैं। पार्टिसिपेट करना है इसमें?

डा० महेश चन्द्र शर्मा: जी नहीं। सोमपाल जी ने अभी एक तथ्य कहा है कि प्रधान मंत्री श्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी ने एक फाइल पर नोटिंग की है जिसमें प्राइस राइज की स्वीकृति दी गयी है। मैं जानना चाहता हूं कि यह तथ्य क्या सदन में उपस्थित किया जा सकता है? मैं जानना चाहता हूं कि क्या यह तथ्य उस प्रकार का है जो सार्वजनिक किया जा सके, या यह तथ्य ऐसा है जो गुप्त होता है। यदि यह तथ्य सार्वजनिक करने वाला तथ्य है तो मैं चाहूंगा कि सत्य स्थिति को बताया जाना चाहिए कि क्या अटल बिहार वाजपेयी जी ने उस फाइल पर ओ०के० किया था।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): धन्यवाद डा० शर्मा। श्री एन० के० पी० साल्वे।

4.00 P.M.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Madam Vice-Chairman, it is not without some degree of pain and anguish that I and my party have to make a common cause with parties to protest against the utterly irrational and unjustified price hike in petroleum products. Madam, I want to submit in all humility to the Government that our protest against the price hike is honest and genuine and our criticism is only *bona fide*. It is not motivated by consideration for aggrandising any political interest, but we want this Government to avoid what may prove to be a very costly economic and political error.

Before I come to make my case as to how the reasons given were utterly untenable, unjustified, untrue and how they were utterly based on untrue grounds, on groundless basis, I want to make one point clear to this Government. I was surprised to hear from the Minister in reply to what Satishji was saying a little while ago, Satishji said, "You have made up your mind to retain this price hike and this debate is futile." Then, the Minister's reply was, "This is for public consumption." Madam, in Parliament we do not debate for public consumption. If we debate here, we mean governance to be brought to the path or rectitude. If what we say is correct, then, we expect your Government to have an open mide and they should be willing to revise this decision. Please do not commit the mistake of taking Parliament for granted. Do you think that the only way to bring the Government to the path of rectitude is by moving a cut motion on the demand in the other House? Please don't drive us to desperation like this. Don't take arbitrary decisions. Take decisions on reason and rational basis. I for one do not put much in store for the fact that you want to go in for a pre-budget hike. If your reasons were 30 per cent as

genuine, 40 per cent as genuine, as you are trying to make them out to be, I would have been the first one to support this kind of price hike. But they are not genuine. They are not correct. We have been taken for a big ride by your bureaucracy, by your officials. You have not been able to tackle them as you should have.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: In the way you have done.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: It is not fair for me to say what we have done. These proposals had come to us many times. It is on record. But we had put them down. We know that officials wanted to enlarge their empire. Now that is what is being done. You have not been able to understand it. The Finance Minister is an able man. I think he would be able to understand it. I hope that the facts and figures which I am going to quote would be duly considered and replied to in a very mature manner.

SHRI T.R. BALU: I just want to inform you in spite of the demand from the bureaucracy to hike the prices, you kept quiet for more than 30 months. You knew this.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Don't draw me into the controversy as to why we have stopped. You should have applied the same reason to stop it. We did not allow them to come up with a price hike. Do you know what is the real working of the Indian Oil Corporation and the ONGC? Do you know their balance-sheets? Have you understood their complaint of inadequacy of working capital? You said as one of the reasons that non-revision of prices would have resulted in their inability to import petroleum products due to lack of finances, shortage and disruption of supplies leading to hardships to people, Oil Pool deficit to which I would come later on. Have you any idea of the liquidity of the Indian Oil Corporation? Have you any idea of the liquidity of the ONGC? If you have any, please tell me. I have the latest balance-sheet of 1995. If you were to see its liquidity, if you were to see its position and say that they are likely to run short of finances to be able to import crude oil, then, I very respectfully submit you have not understood the problem at all. They want money not because they are running short to import crude oil. They want money for their capital investment. It has been the policy of the Government that you build up a very strong oil sector. That is the reason why there has been so much price hike one after another. These companies have become super, super rich.

But to say now, at this stage, that you do not have adequacy of working capital is the biggest of dishonesty.

Now, may I start by quoting some figures to you? I will start by referring to page 13 of the Annual Report of the Indian Oil Corporation. This is what you say for 1995. Your Corporation earned a profit after tax of Rs. 1019 crores during the year. This is 32 per cent more than the net profits during 1993-94. The profit after tax to average net worth percentage has gone down from 16.6 to 14 in the previous year. Earnings per Share is Rs. 27.56. This is a ten-rupee share and this is the earning. And you are complaining that you are running short of working capital. Is that the real cause or do you want more money for capital expenditure? If that is so, come out honestly saying, "This is what we want". You are wanting finance for your plan projects. Then, I will come to certain basic issues.

SHRI T.R. BAALU: This is profit after tax.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Do you know that this is one of the zero-tax companies? That is what you know about this. Please do not try to get into arguments with me. I have got the facts and figures with me. Please look at page 10 of this report and see what it has to say about what the Corporation owns and what the Corporation owes. Share capital in crores of this company is, how much?

How much, Mr. Minister? Have you any idea?

SHRI T.R. BAALU: You have got the balance-sheet with you.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Have you any idea as to what the reserve is? Give me some idea. If you know you are really running short of working capital, give us some idea of what the capital is and what the reserves are. The capital of this company is Rs. 389 crores and the reserve fund is Rs. 6,217 crores. How have you built up such large reserves unless you were charging super, super profits? How would you get this kind of reserves made up? Well, I am happy you have invested this money in building up refineries, in building up a large oil sector. But the question is .....*(Interruptions)*.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Will the former Minister kindly recollect that a substantial portion has been .....*(Interruptions)*.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): May I request hon. Members and the hon. Minister.....*(Interruptions)*. He is speaking. When a Member speaks, there should not be any interruption.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Madam, I only strengthen his argument. it is not for development alone that the money has been spent. It has been used also to swindle in the stock market when somebody else was in power.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Your turn is there. You speak when your turn comes.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: I cannot retrospectively reply to that now.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: That is why, prospectively the hon. Minister cannot reply. After all, ignorance is wisdom. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN: This is the legacy you have left. *(Interruptions)*.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Not only money from the highly profitable ONGC was siphoned off to help stock brokers who made wild speculations, but the Minister who was in charge at that time had to make an unceremonial exit because of this. I do not want to name that Minister. But you know that. Please do not defend him.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: It is a different aspect of the matter as to whether or not the monies earned have been properly spent or not. But I am not on that. There is one thing I want to assure my friends of. I started by saying that it is with regret and pain that we have to associate ourselves with those who are protesting. I am not happy doing it at all. But the fact remains that these monies and large funds have been built up by these companies to build up a very large oil sector. It was the policy at that time and it is here I want to submit, please do not come out with dishonesty, do not come out with untenable, untrue and incorrect reasons. You have run short of funds now to be able to finance your Plan projects. And that is because you do not want to borrow money. You say, "Our borrowings have increased". Have you any idea, Mr. Minister, about what your borrowings in 1994-95 were, in 1994-95 compared to 1993-94?

SHRI T.R. BAALU: It was 1.5 billion dollars. It has been hiked to 2.00 billion dollars. We could not get the permission form the Ministry. The whole problem has arisen out of that. We could not import beyond that.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Minister, I would request that when you reply, you should cover all these issues. What is the hurry? ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Sir, when you reply, you should deal with all the aspects of the matter. Please don't interrupt because my time is very limited.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Minister, you should not waste the time of the hon. Member...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Madam, I do not like to interrupt him. He is our colleague, esteemed colleague. I want him...(*Interruptions*)...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): That is why we are requesting him that when he answers, he should cover all the points raise by you.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Madam, I want him to understand what the real problem is; what is it that is compelling us to take this very extreme step of protesting, and protesting so vehemently. Madam, the borrowing in 1990-91 was 7,128. It was 6,217 in 1992-93, 6,500 in 1993-94 and it came down to 5,367. When you are talking of Oil Pool Account, do you know what is the amount due by the IOC to the Oil Pool Account? And the Oil Pool Account is the biggest hogwash. The amount due to Oil Pool Account is Rs. 1,361 crores. Where do you get Rs. 5,700 crores?—I do not know. This is as per the balance sheet I am talking; Rs. 1,300 crores is the amount due! And why is it due? What is the mechanism of working? To that, I will come a little later.

Coming to dividend, dividend is very important. If you are in any such company which has such severe and serious liquidity crunch, you cannot pay the kind of dividend and the bonus share that you are paying. For the third consecutive year your directors have recommended a dividend of 40 per cent. A company which is fastening this kind of liability on the plea that they do not have money is declaring a dividend of 40 per cent! Madam, I would like to purchase—I do not have much money, but with whatever I have.

I would like to buy—this ten-rupee share for a thousand rupees! What is it that they are talking about?—I really do not know. Look at the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation. What do they say? ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: If you want to buy the share, do not buy it from harshad Mehta ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Later on, I am going to suggest that if you want to raise money to finance your capital expenditure, it is a well-known principle of finance, Madam, that for a capital expenditure you cannot fasten the liability on the existing consumers only; let it be evenly spread out. But if you borrow, that means the liability is on those who consume petrol today and tomorrow. You do not want to do that. You just want to fasten the entire liability on those who are consuming today and for years to come, for decades to come, and even if it will be taken by those who in future will be buying products from those refineries.

Madam, let us have a look at the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation and what happens there. Please refer to page 8. What does this company say? And this again I am referring from the Annual Report for 1994-95; "The ONGC today ranks among the top twenty oil companies of the world with production exceeding one million barrel oil equivalent per day and reserves of more than one billion tonnes of oil and gas in spite of being in the high risk business of hydrocarbon exploration, our return on sales is 16.5 per cent and that has made us one of the most profitable companies in the world. This is the state of affairs of ONGC? What do they say? Madam, they made a profit of Rs. 7,254 crores and interest payment of Rs. 2,257 crores; Rs. 4,997 crores or say Rs. 5,000 crores cash is available with this company. I am sure, the situation in 1996 is no worse and no better. And look at the dividend, another thing on page 20. That also is something worth mentioning. They are speaking of

dividend and this is what they say. They are declaring a dividend of 20%. My submission, therefore, in view of all this, is this. At any rate, there is an advance payment to the employees of Rs. 222 crores. What is this about? You please tell us. Mr. Minister, do you know that this company has given an advance? The ONGC has given an advance to the employees of Rs. 222 crores! That is, of course, not related to the price hike, but something into which you will please look and tell us, tell the Parliament, about it. Now so far as we are concerned, what is it? That you have to really deal with. The Co-ordination Committee has given certain reasons. They say why this price hike has become necessary. Apart from the utter myth that they are creating of a crunch, a liquidity crunch, which is not true—at least on that Som Palji will agree with me—what is the real reasons? One of the reasons that they are giving is due to large deficit in the account payments, payments due to other oil refinery makers, companies were not being paid thereby forcing them to borrow funds from the market to finance their plant project. The PSUs have started demanding that the interest difference between their borrowing rate and that available on their outstanding may be reimbursed. Fair enough. We are willing to reimburse the difference. Let there be an increase, if you want there to be an increase. You are talking about subsidy. Whom are you befooling? You rig up your prices at an absolutely unrealistic level, a profiteering and racketeering level, and then say you give subsidy! Why don't you bring down the prices? You don't have to pay any subsidy then. If the prices were brought down to a realistic level on the basis of supply and demand, of which Mr. Satish Agarwal talked about, would you ever run in a loss? No, you will not run in a loss. You will have only to build up such a huge, large, reserve. I am not saying that reserves are unjustifiable. But my two objections are, firstly, to be honest about that, why do you need this money? That is number one. Number two is: Is it fair on a principle of public finance to burden with Rs. 11,200 crores? We have to finance the refineries. We have to get it for your planned project. Why don't you borrow right now? Do you want to know the means by which it can be done? Go public, if you want to raise Rs. 3,000 crores or Rs. 4,000 crores or Rs. 5,000 crores. The shares of these companies will be sold like hot cakes. But you would not do that. Then bank borrowings. Borrow from the financial institutions. Why don't you want to borrow? Because you will have to pay 20% or 22% interest. Pay 22% interest and cast the burden of interest on us. But don't cast the burden on the capital expenditure. That is the basis of my argument. For capital expenditure you are passing this burden on to the consumer. On a revenue account you are raising more and more money to be able to finance your capital. Now, after liberalisation, when there is private sector coming in, apart from the factor of inefficiency with which all these reports are replete, how much of the gas is being flared away? What is the amount of wasteful expenditure that is going on in the public sector undertakings? There is the warranty that if you cannot do it, give it to the private sector. Let them put it on. They are also Indians. Indians can do it. If the Indians cannot do it with the money from abroad, don't put this unrealistic burden on the people of India. Then the inflation aspect is so summarily dismissed. Yesterday while speaking in the Lok Sabha it was stated that it was going to be negligible. The Co-ordination Committee says that the inflation rate will not be more than 1.2%. Madam, while in college once I was asked to write an essay on Malthusian theory of population growth. The theory is that while the resources grow algebraically, the population grows geometrically. I happened to write in a slightly lighter vein that Malthus might be right otherwise, but he should have consulted his wife because population could not go

by algebra and geometry. And I repeat now, Madam, if the Oil Co-ordination Committee members had ever consulted their wives, they would not have talked about this stupidity. Have they known the phenomenon of cascading effect, the multiplier effect? What is the multiplier effect?

That is the reason why I have always fought that there should be no hike in petroleum prices. This is the history of inflation in this country; more than 50 per cent is the history of indiscriminate unjustified, unreasonable, rise in price.

I was never for this kind of petroleum sector being built from the revenue. Let there be bank borrowings. Let there be sale of securities. Madam, do you know the amount of securities and bonds? Mr. Minister, do you know it? Why don't you disinvest them? Why don't you disinvest your shares? Why can't you borrow from the World Bank? Why are you fastening this liability on a set of people? You will see a kind of inflation that is going to have a cascading effect. It is going to have a multiplier effect. If you are living in a world where you think that the common man and the poor man will not be affected, them I am afraid, you are living in a fool's paradise. Everyone will be affected. Inflation will go up. How are you going to check inflation? You are not able to reduce your revenue deficit which is 2.9 per cent. You have promised that 5.9 per cent fiscal deficit will be brought down to 4 per cent. I think it will be a miracle. The day you bring it down to 4 per cent, I will go and salute you. It is not a joke. The Common Minimum Programme....

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: "Reduction in fiscal deficit" is there in the Common Minimum Programme. But they are not going to bring it down in six months or one year.

SHRI SOM PAL: The phenomena which we have been enlisting are more of legacy's than of our choice. We definitely are committed to rectify that.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: I am very happy. I admire your courage.

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Give them some time.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: I thought in the Common Minimum Programme when you talked of bringing down the fiscal deficit, it was for 1996-97. How much time do you want? Beyond 1997? Mr. Som Pal when you.....

SHRI SOM PAL: Whatever you think is reasonable as compared to 48 years. Whatever time you give us.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Madam, all that I want to submit is, it is a very good and it is a very laudable approach to say that you are going to bring down the fiscal deficit from 5.9 per cent to 4 per cent. They never will be able to do it. I have no doubt about it. It comprises 2.9 per cent revenue deficit also. What about reducing the revenue deficit? You want to cut Rs. 3,000 crores and they are all on your head and you are not able to do anything to them.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Without controlling inflation, deficit cannot be brought down.

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: Please, don't disturb me. Your turn will come. Madam, all that I am trying to say is the requirement today is that you abridge the area of governance, reduce the Government expenditure. Shri Satish Agarwal has made a very valid point. When there was a surplus—that is why, I say the entire Oil Pool Account is a plenty of hogwash—it is supposed to be there to take care of very violent fluctuations in the market price or the international price of crude. But have you seen it working all these years? Why was it misappropriated to the tune of Rs. 4,000 crores? When I am talking, I am addressing the Government and I maintain I have always been against hike in petroleum prices. And it has taken away Rs. 4000 crores. But you have collected over Rs. 23,000 crores this year by way of cess, by way of import duty, by

way of excise. Are you going to use oil as a weapon to crush the entire economy? You will ruin the rhythm of the growth. In 1995-96 the growth is 7 per cent in real terms—a real achievement for this country in economic terms by any standard all over the world for a developing country of a size of India. With a real true vibrant democracy to have achieved 7 per cent growth is indeed a miracle. Please don't disturb the rhythm which you will be disturbing, Mr. Minister. The rhythm of growth if it is disturbed, we will be reverting back again to stagnation, we will be reverting back again to unemployment, we will be reverting back to many other things which will not be desirable. The point I am trying to make is, please don't take a measure. Just because you have taken a measure I don't know how much you have understood of the entire economics of this. At least, I expected Mr. Chidambaram to understand the whole thing. The Finance Minister should have understood this. There is no dearth of money and funds with the IOC, the ONGC or the oil sector. Yes, they may be running short of funds for capital investment. As to the Oil Pool Account, a time has come when you should have a good look at it. What is an Oil Pool Account ultimately? The surplus, the reserve, instead of coming here, is going into the Oil Pool Account. When you have large reserves and when there is no deficit, these companies are in a position to write it off. Please bring down prices to a more realistic level. He talked of supply and demand. Is there any supply and demand in this? It is a monopoly business that you are doing and you are making super, super, super profits from it and then you tell us that unless you do this, you will not be able to import. It is a blatant lie. It is falsehood. With this kind of balance-sheet, how can you say that you will not be able to import? If you have a price to pay, then charge the price honestly. Please do not hike it up to such levels as you have done. Shri Som Pal was saying that if they did not do this, they would not be able to manage the oil sector. That was the thrust of his argument. We do not want to impede the efficient management of the oil sector for want of finances. All I am saying is that there are ways other than this, there are other honourable ways which would help develop the economy, which would help accelerate the economy and at the same time save the common man from this crushing burden that you have imposed on him and if you were to proceed that way, I am sure the whole nation would salute you. We want you to survive. We want you to give a stable governance and bring financial stability and economic stability to the country. That is what we expect of this Government. That is why we are saying that we are distressed. You are taking a measure which will be counter productive. Please do not repeat, nor say that we debate here for public consumption. It is not for public consumption. It is for bringing this Government on a path of rectitude. Thank you.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Madam, I am speaking after some parliamentary stalwarts like Shri Satish Agarwal, Shri Salve and Shri Som Pal have spoken. Firstly, let me be frank. I appreciate many of the points that were raised by Shri Agarwal. I fully agree with him on some of the points. I will not repeat them.

I have a lot of respect and regard for Shri Salve. But it is very difficult to digest what he has said. I respect his suggestions—I will not say sermons—on governance; right from finance to the management of the petro-chemical sector. We are against the hike and I am sure all the Members, whether on this side or that side are against it. No one is in favour of this hike which affects the common man. So far as we are concerned, from the very beginning we had said that a wrong thing had been done. The way it was done, that is, the prices were hiked just before the Parliament was summoned, was also

wrong. But it is a legacy that we have inherited and the present Government must try has been disinherit it as quickly as possible. The second point is that the United Front Government believes in transparency. If an extreme measure such as this hike had to be taken for extraordinary reasons, then it should have been told to the people through the Parliament. So many explanations are coming in the newspapers about the oil corporations. Whether it is correct and whether it is justified or not, I will come to that later.

But we should have probably talked to the people, interacted with them with these facts and figures. There are many facts and figures which we are also not clear about. Firstly, I would like the Minister to clarify whether any money was withdrawn in the earlier years for meeting the Budget deficit so far as the Oil Pool account is concerned. If it is so, when and how many times had the money been repaid? This is No. 1. As regards my second point, right from the beginning, this Government was found responsive to the initial protests by reducing the hike in the diesel prices. I am sure that after this debate also, the Government will have an open mind to review its decision and, if necessary, also totally stop this pressure on the common people on account of this hike. Then, is it a fact that on 30th June, 1996, the IOC told this Government that they did not have the money for importing oil and hence they required this hike in prices? If it is so, I would like to know whether the earlier Governments were also apprised of this problem, whether real or unreal, by the IOC. Or is it that all of a sudden this Government was warned about it? If at all the earlier Governments, the Government earlier to you and the one earlier to that, were also aware of this problem, what was the contingency plan of the then Governments? There must have been contingency plans with the Governments. This Rs. 5,700 crore—deficit, which you are talking about, I am sure, has not come up all of a sudden, on the 1st of June or the 2nd of June. This Rs. 5,700-crore deficit, which you are talking about, was observed on 31.3.96. What was the reaction at that time? We want the people to know about it. It is not only that we should judge the situation, but the people also should judge it. Also, as far as I know,—I may be wrong—the hikes in prices were made in July, 1991, September, 1992 and in January-February, 1994. All these hikes were there even earlier. It is being estimated that the deficit would go up to Rs. 11,700 crores by the end of March, 1997. This must have been made on the basis of international crude prices. As far as I see, in the year 1995-96, the crude price though fluctuating is not showing only an increasing trend. In April, 1995, it was 18.6 dollars per barrel. It came down to 16.1 dollars in October, 1995, then it went up to 19.4 dollars in March, 1996 and in April, 1996, it was 20.7 dollars per barrel. So, on what basis was this estimation of Rs. 11,700 crores made so far as the crude prices are concerned? The Government may kindly review whether it is not on the higher side. They can do the estimate for six months and then they can come to the people again if the crude prices all of a sudden increase, since the crude prices have been fluctuating—they are also decreasing. I would like to know the average crude price on which this estimate has been made. Coming to the reasons for this, there are three major factors which have been mentioned. One is the increase in the imported crude price and the other is the rupee depreciation. These two points are combined. So far as rupee depreciation is concerned, Mr. Agarwal has said a lot about it. I don't think that anything further has to be said so far as rupee devaluation is concerned. In 1981, the price of crude oil was 33 dollars per barrel. In 1993, it became Rs. 14 dollars per barrel. It was because of the extremely nice financial management with so many brains in the earlier ruling party that they managed to see that the people of this country had to pay more even

when the price of crude oil in the international market came down to half. This was the brilliant financial management. I am sure the present Government would try to unlearn this brilliant financial management. I would not like to say anything more on this. Even though the cost has come down from 33 dollars to 14 dollars, our import cost has gone up. Thanks to the brilliant financial management because of which the value of rupee has come to this level. I would not talk more on this.

Agarwalji was referring to the report of the Committee on Public Undertakings. I was also a Member of this Committee.

The major problem before the country—the country is suffering from it right now—is the gradual reduction in the production of crude oil. So far as the brilliant management of oil exploration is concerned, it could be seen from the following figures. I am giving the figures. Production of crude in 1989-90 was 34 million tonnes. It came down to 26 million tonnes in 1992-93 and 27 million tonnes in 1993-94. The demand is increasing. But your production is not increasing. Production is going down. Why is the production going down? What is the problem? Why was exploration not done? Where have those brilliant financial ideas gone?

Renukaji is not here. In the last five years, proven oil fields like Rava, Panna were handed over. What happened to them? What was the money invested by the Government? What has come out of that investment?

SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: The investment was 250 million dollars.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Production is coming down. What steps are you taking?

Madam, coming from West Bengal, I know what the position of the Bengal basin oil exploration is. In the case of Bengal basin oil exploration, from 1970 onwards, this thing has been going on. There is a charge that a section of the ONGC officials are not in favour of having oil explored in that area. Now I would like to quote from the Kingston report and I request the hon. Minister to kindly go through this. This is a report on the ONGC's oil search in the Bengal basin. As per information, an amount of Rs. 600 crore was invested and lost there because of poor methods, poor operations. Oil is there in the Bengal basin, but it could not be explored. I request the hon. Minister to kindly place the Kingston's report on the Table of this House. Let the posterity know, beyond the barriers of parties, who the responsible persons were who mismanaged oil exploration for the last 30 years in this country.

As far as imports and consumption are concerned, is it not a fact—it was not during Mrs. Gandhi's time—that the term 'self-reliance' has become a dirty word in this country? Production of crude oil is decreasing and the overall demand is increasing. Because the demand is increasing, we are importing more. If this is the position, what should be the thrust? The thrust should be on self-reliance. I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the Common Minimum Programme. If we have to be self-reliant, oil exploration has to be given more stress. We cannot remain stagnant on the production front. It is not oil, what is next?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Mukherjee, you have already taken 10 minutes' time. Kindly conclude now.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Madam, I would need another five minutes. I was talking so far about various financial matters. I have to make some important points. Please give me five minutes.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I have before me a very long list. I have to complete it.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Okay, Madam. I will finish within five

minutes. Gas can be another replacement for the source of hydro-carbon. What has been our story for gas? Mr. Agarwal was talking about flaring up of gas throughout the country. Even in Assam! This is a peculiar country where 27 per cent of gas is being flared up in Assam. And, we have gas turbines for generation of power being run by high-speed diesel, the diesel which is the biggest component of our import of petroleum products! This is where the country has been managed so nicely that a fertiliser factory is being run on oil sitting on the bed of coal. The late Mrs. Gandhi had foreseen it in the Seventees and she had wanted that there should be coal-based fertiliser factories. Madam, unless we have a fuel policy, unless we have an integrated energy policy, can we talk of demand and supply of crude? You can politicise the issue. You can give sermons on political basis. But this has been the thing which has been totally lacking. I am quoting from the Standing Committee's Report.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Dipankar Mukherjee, please conclude.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Madam, please allow me to speak for a few minutes more because Mr. Salve is here. I am quoting from the Standing Committee's on Energy's 26th Report. This concerns Mr. Salve. This was presented to the Lok Sabha on the 31st of May, 1995 and on the same day to the Rajya Sabha also. It is regarding power policy. It says, "The success of the power policy to a considerable extent, depends on an integrated fuel policy. This is, however, not the case today. In the absence of a comprehensive fuel policy, there has been a proposal to set up hydro-carbon or diesel-based power projects. Considering the fact that the availability of indigenous natural gas and petroleum products is limited and these are the best feed-stocks for fertilisers and petro-chemicals, the question of using this as fuel for power projects requires examination and calls for a clear policy guideline". Now, in spite of Dr. Naunihal Singh being there and Mr. Agarwal being there, we are going to run a 700 MW power plant in Maharashtra with diesel. The Great Enron!

SHRI N.K.P. SALVE: No, no. With naphtha.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: Initially! Whatever it is, it may be imported fuel, it may be naphtha, it doesn't matter. You ask that Swadeshi Jagran Manch, they have brought out a nice paper on that. I mean, I am not blaming I am seeing Dr. Naunihal Singh there. I can have a discussion with him. Is there any justification for this country, where 60 per cent of the imported petroleum products is diesel. That you should have an 800 MW power plant, run with Diesel naptha which having coal and other resources including the flaring up of gas? It is the comman man, the poor man who has to suffer. Mr. Minister, this is a wrong policy planning. It is a total failure of the energy policy in this country. It is a total failure of the fuel policy in this country. Why should the poor people suffer? Why are not the austerity measures in consumption of energy being taken? I am in full agreement with you, Sir, on the supply management. But there has to be demand management. What demand management do we have? If we were running short of petroleum products, what happened to the austerity measures that were proposed ten years ago? There was a proposal by the D.V. Kapoor Committee in 1983. What had he proposed? He had proposed conservation measures. What has happened to those energy conservation measures? There has been no conservation. You have been talking about these industries. How many industries are having energy audit? Why should we not have mandatory energy audit like we have financial audit in all the industries, in transport, in offices? Have some measures of austerity in the country, in the Government, everywhere, so far as petroleum products are

concerned. Why should the poor man suffer? Why should the poor farmer suffer? Why can't we have a dual price policy? This country suffers not only from petroleum products' deficiency, but it is energy complacency that this country is suffering from. For the last thirty years, this country has been suffering from energy complacency whereas there should have been energy efficiency. Let us talk about the petro-cost and not the rupee cost. Cutting across party barriers, I am again appealing to you as a professional from my party, let the poor man not be hit by this. Let us talk about petro-cost, not the rupee cost. Fifteen to thirty per cent of this country can afford the rupee cost. You increase the cost by whatever percentage. By that the consumption is not going down. But the country can not afford further petro cost. With these words, I request the Government to review the price hike of petrol and petroleum products. Thank you Mr. Agarwal and thank you, Madam Vice-Chairperson.

SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY (Tamil Nadu): Madam, many senior Members have spoken on this issue. The senior BJP Member Shri Satish Agarwal has given his opinion and asked the Government to reduce the prices of petrol and petroleum products. Some Members have put the blame on the previous Congress Government for this price hike. They said the previous Government failed to reform the refineries and there was less production and inefficient management. They said that these are the reasons for this price hike. Anyhow, Members of this House have placed their views and suggestions before the government and have asked the Government to reduce this price hike. Shri Agarwal explained under what circumstances the prices of various commodities increase and under what circumstances the consumer is able to get a lower price. The producer of a commodity fixes a higher price if the demand is more than the production. If the production is much more than the demand, then the consumer pays a lower price. It is applicable to all commodities. However, the prices of products like petrol, diesel and LPG affect the day-to-day life of the people of this country. The Government should have some control over the prices of these products. Since a major part of the crude is imported, the cost of raw material depends upon the international dollar price of crude imported and the exchange value of the rupee. The value of the imports will go up, if the international dollar price of crude goes up, or else, even if the international price is stable, the cost of the imported crude will go up, if the value of the rupee vis-a-vis the dollar slightly goes down. The Government has no control on the price hike of these products internationally. By strengthening the rupee, the dollar cost of import in terms of rupees will come down. If the Government take some action in this regard, there will be no need to increase the price of petrol and petroleum products.

Secondly, there seems to be concrete efforts to reduce the cost of refining and distribution in respect of some old refineries and the Government has allowed 12% return on investment. This is working as an incentive to reduce cost of refining. Similarly, if efforts are taken to reduce or avoid pipeline losses due to pilferage in the case of distribution then the cost can surely go down. By such cost reduction the deficit gap would be wiped out and there will be no need to increase the price. The Government should concentrate on this line. It is stated that the price increase will completely wipe out oil pool deficit of Rs. 12,000 crores in just nine months, i.e., by 31.3.1997. Normally, when the Government increases price it never comes down. If the oil pool deficit is wiped out by 31.3.1997, then where is the need to continue with this rise in prices? For a whole year the increased price will fetch additionally Rs. 16,000 crores. Why does this Government want such a huge

amount from the poor people? I think, this is because of the refineries working without cost consciousness, inefficiency in production and wasteful expenditure. Does the Government want to collect this from the poor people?

Many Members have expressed their views. Only the upper middle class suffers this 30% price rise. We have helped the poor people. In villages there are small land-owners owning one, two or three acres. In Tamil Nadu, the agricultural community uses two wheelers to go to the fields. Women-folk office goers, agriculturists, and small farmers also now-a-days use two-wheelers in addition to three-wheelers, tractors and other things. Fifteen to twenty per cent population of agricultural community in mofussil areas uses these. Taking all these aspects in view, the price rise has affected the normal life of the poor people and agricultural community and all levels of people. the price hike is an unwarranted one. This Government should keep in mind the economic condition of each and every individual citizen, the per capita income of the citizens and their purchasing power.

I request the Minister to do something. I am expecting from the Minister that he will give some happy news, that this Government will take some action to reduce the price of petrol and other products.

Thank you, Madam.

श्री ब्रह्मकुमार भट्ट (गुजरात): उपसभाध्यक्ष महोदया, यहां जो इकोनोमिक एक्सपर्ट है उन लोगों ने भाषण किया। मेरे ख्याल में जो फिगर्ज की बातें हैं, उनसे काम चलने वाला नहीं है। सचमुच में तो जो असर होने वाला है सामान्य जनता के ऊपर, इसके ऊपर ही विचार करना चाहिए। जो पैट्रोलियम प्राइसेज बढ़े इसका असर एक विशियस सरकिल की तरह होने वाला है। सब चीजों के ऊपर इसका असर होगा। जो चीजें आती हैं वे गांवों से आती हैं उनके लिए ट्रांसपोर्ट की जरूरत पड़ती है तो वहां डीजल की जरूरत पड़ेगी। तो गांवों से जो साग-भाजी आती है, दूध आता है, कोई भी और चीज आती है उसके लिए डीजल की जरूरत पड़ेगी तो इसका सीधा असर उसके भाव के ऊपर, रेट के ऊपर पड़ने वाला है। यह जो बोझा है यह सामान्य आदमी के ऊपर पड़ेगा। अब जो बस है वह स्टेट की बस हो या शहरी विस्तार? की बस हो, जो रिक्शे में बैठने वाले हैं वे तो इलाइट नहीं है, वे तो पैसे वाले नहीं हैं, वे सामान्य आदमी हैं तो इन सबके ऊपर असर पड़ने वाला है। मैडम चेयरमैन हम लोगों को यह सोचना चाहिए। हमें तो सेंट्रल हाल में जो मिलता है वह सब सब्सीडाइज्ड मिलता है एम० पीज० को। मगर जो एक सामान्य आदमी है इसके बजट के ऊपर, इसके किचन बजट के ऊपर जो असर पड़ने वाला है इसके ऊपर हमें सोचना चाहिए। आंकड़ों में पड़ने से उसका कोई रास्ता निकलने वाला नहीं है। जो पगारदार आदमी है, जो कारकून है, जो शिक्षक है, जो गुमाश्ता है जो लो-इन्कम ग्रुप का आदमी है इसके ऊपर क्या असर पड़ने वाला है। इस वर्ग की लाखों महिलाएं हैं जिनके किचन में गैस है, इनके लिए भी हमें कुछ सोचना चाहिए। हमारी महिलाएं हमारी बहिनें खाने के लिए आटा बांधती है, लोट बांधती है। अब तेल तो महंगा हो गया है। थोड़ा इसके अंदर तेल डालती है कुछ खाना बनाने के लिए। मगर यह जो गैस का मामला हो गया है इसके कारण 106 रुपए की गैस अब 136 रुपए में मिलती है। तो जो लोट बांधती है, आटा बांधती हैं उसमें तेल के साथ उसकी आंख में से जो आंसू निकलेंगे वे आंसू आटा बांधने के लिए उसके अंदर गिरेंगे और उन आंसुओं से उसको आटा बांधना पड़ेगा। यह स्थिति आज पैदा हो रही है। यह हम सोचने के लिए तैयार नहीं हैं। फिर उसका कट किधर पड़ेगा। उसका कट किधर पड़ेगा? वह पड़ेगा बच्चे के दूध में, दवाइयों में, उसकी चप्पल होगी, स्कीपर्स होंगे या उसके लिए जो पुस्तकें लानी पड़ती हैं उसमें यह कट होने वाला है। तो यह जो असर है यह सार्वजनिक असर है उस असर को हमें सोचना चाहिए। हमारे साथी, जो कम्युनिस्ट साथी हैं उन्होंने इसका विरोध किया। अच्छी बात है। मगर यह विरोध चलने का नहीं है। पहले तो यह बात थी कि कांग्रेस के सपोर्ट से हम सरकार में नहीं बैठेंगे। फिर कांग्रेस के सपोर्ट से सरकार में बैठे। एक गीत है, मैंने सुना है सिनेमा में, "ना ना करके फिर प्यार किसी से हो ही गया"। ऐसे ही यहां क्या हुआ? ना ना करके फिर भी सरकार में बैठ गए। पहले तो कहते थे कांग्रेस के सपोर्ट से सरकार में नहीं बैठेंगे मगर कांग्रेस के सपोर्ट से सरकार में बैठे और अभी विरोध करते हैं कि इसको विदड्रा करो। भाई, आप तो मिनिस्टर हैं, गवर्नमेंट में बैठे हैं, यहां बोलने की क्या जरूरत है। यह मगर के आंसू की बात नहीं चलेगी। जो

फ्रंट के हमारे साथी यहां विरोध करते हैं वे इकट्ठे मिल जाएं, उसका भी एक कामन प्रोग्राम बना लें, विरोध करने का कि उसको विदड्रा करो, रिवाइज करो जिससे कि जो बुरा असर पड़ने वाला है वह असर जितना कम से कम हो सके उतना कम हो जाए। यह करना चाहिए। एक और बात यह कहने की है। प्रधान मंत्री ने कहा कि इससे इलाइट पर असर होगा और मिडिल क्लास पर असर होगा। ऐसा नहीं है।

5.00 म०प०

हम कोई एलीट के वकील नहीं हैं। एलीट के ऊपर जो कुछ करना है वह करो, मगर जो सामान्य आदमी है, मिडल क्लास है, लोअर मिडल क्लास है इसके ऊपर भी जो भारी असर पड़ने वाला है इस पर भी विचार करना चाहिए। मेरा तो सुझाव है कि जो पेट्रोल का लिमिटेड यूज़ करता है, कम प्रयोग करता है इसको कूपन इंट्रोड्यूस करो कि एक लिमिट तक इस रेट पर मिलेगा। इससे ऊपर जो पेट्रोल यूज़ करता है, उससे ऊपर से जो कुछ ऐसा पैसा लेना है वह हमको कोई एतराज नहीं है। मगर जो सामान्य आदमी है, जो टू व्हीलर चलाता है, जो लूना चलाता है, वह गांव में भी चलाता है। शहर में ही चलाता है ऐसा नहीं है, गांव में भी चलाता है, इसके ऊपर असर नहीं होना चाहिए। मैडम वाइस चेयरमैन, सवाल तो यह है कि आज जिसके पास ब्लैक मनी है उसके लिए तो कोई सवाल नहीं है, मगर जिसकी फिक्स्ड आमदनी है उसके लिए बड़ा सवाल है। अब ब्लैक मनी का तो इतना बड़ा साम्राज्य इस देश में हो गया है कि मेरा तो सुझाव है कि दो मिनिस्टर, फाइनांस मिनिस्टर दो रखने चाहिए। एक ब्लैकमिनिस्ट्री के फाइनांस मिनिस्टर और एक व्हाइट मिनिस्ट्री के फाइनांस मिनिस्टर, ऐसा जमाना अब हिन्दुस्तान में आ गया है। पैरलल इकोनोमी इस देश में चलती है। तो जिसके पास ब्लैक मनी है ले ले उनके पास से हमें कोई एतराज नहीं है, मगर जिसके पास फिक्सड इन्कम है उसको कुछ राहत मिलनी चाहिए। वह सब से अधिक महत्व की बात है। इसके ऊपर प्राइम मिनिस्टर को और पेट्रोलियम मिनिस्टर को सोचना चाहिए।

अंत में मैडम वाइस चेयरमैन, मैं इतना ही कहूंगा कि यह तो प्री-मौनसून शावर जैसा हो गया है, मौनसून तो अभी बाकी है। तो जब मौनसून में भी अगर कुछ आ जाए टैक्सेशन तो उस वक्त जो गरीब वर्ग है, मध्यम वर्ग, लोअर मिडल क्लास के आदमी है उसके लिए कुछ सोच कर, विचार करके भविष्य में आने वाले मौनसून शावर में यह सुझाव दिया जाए। इतना ही मेरा कहना है और खास करके मैं कहूंगा कि जो पेट्रोलियम प्राइसेस में हाइक की है और विशेषकर जो बेरोज़गार, लोअर मिडल क्लास और गरीब वर्ग है, किसानों पर भी जिसका असर होने वाला है, वह विदड्रा होनी चाहिए जैसे यहां दूसरे साथियों ने बात कही इसकी मैं सपोर्ट करता हूं और आशा रखता हूं कि पेट्रोलियम मिनिस्टर इसके बारे में सोचेंगे। धन्यवाद।

श्री महेश्वर सिंह: एक मिनट, मैडम। ...(व्यवधान)

SYED SIBTEY RAZI (Uttar Pradesh): Madam, it was decided yesterday that the hon. the Civil Aviation Minister will give clarifications on the statement made about the Archana airplane accident. It is now five O'clock, I think the Minister is not here.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I also would take the sense of the House because in the list of business it has been given here that the Short Duration discussion will be over; it should be over today. Now it is five O' clock. Now there are two Ministers sitting here who would like to give clarifications on the in statements. So shall we continue with the discussion?

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, clarifications can be carried on tomorrow because it is a very important subject.

श्री महेश्वर सिंह: यह कार्यसूची में है। ...(व्यवधान)

SYED SIBTEY RAZI: Madam, I have a point to make. Yesterday I raised this question that the question of the security and safety of the passengers and the lives of many, many persons who travel by this private airline are at risk. So it is very necessary that we should be given the opportunity to seek clarifications on the statement. Yesterday we made our objection that in this way the statement should not be brought in this House because most of the time it will be just lagging behind and we won't we able to seek clarifications and you agreed with that point of view. That is why you said it categorically that it will be taken up

today and it is on the agenda. This is my point. It is my duty to raise.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): देखिए आपने दिल से पुकारा और मंत्री जी हाजिर हो गए है... ...**(व्यवधान)** तो मैं यह पूछना चाहती हूं, Mr. *Minister, would you like to continue this* Short Duration Discussion after five O'clock or would you like to take up the clarifications first?

SYED SIBTEY RAZI: My submission is, we should take up the clarifications first and we can continue with the discussions later on. *(Interruptions)*

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Do you want to finish the Short Duration Discussion today itself or not? *(Interruptions)*

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Madam, we should complete the short Duration Discussion first. Let it be completed first. *It may take another twenty-twenty-five* minutes. *(Interruptions)*

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): This is what I wanted to know from the hon. Members. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: After the Short Duration Discussion is over, we can have the clarifications.

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Madam, may I make a submission? Many Members have had the opportunity to speak on this subject. Ours is a small group. We come under the 'Others' category. Not a single Member has had the opportunity to speak. We are tailenders. We do not get an opportunity.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Pradhan, please do not have any reservations in your mind. I have the list before me. A Member from your party, Mr. Shirodkar, has already given his name. His name is there in the list. Unless Mr. Shirodkar speaks in the House today, the hon. Minister would not reply. This I can assure you. Okay? Don't get agitated all the time.

SHRI SATISH PRADHAN: Thank you, Madam.

श्री महेश्वर सिंह: मैडम, जैसाकि माननीय सदस्य रजी साहब ने कहा कि हिमाचल में हुई इस दुर्घटना को घटे 7 दिन हो गए हैं, लेकिन रोज इस विषय को पोस्टपोन किया जा रहा है।

श्री उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): पोस्टपोन नहीं किया जाएगा।

श्री महेश्वर सिंह: तो आज यह हो जाएगा?

श्री उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): पोस्टपोन नहीं किया जाएगा। इसीलिए मैंने यह पूछा था कि जो बिजनेस आप के सामने और मेरे सामने है वह शॉर्ट इयूरेशन डिस्कसन चल रहा है, इसीलिए मैंने सदन से पूछा कि 5 बजे के बाद हम इस को कंटीन्यू करना चाहेंगे? तो आप के वरिष्ट सदस्य श्री सतीश अग्रवाल जी ने कहा कि, हां इस को कंटीन्यू करेंगे। इस के बाद कुल्लु-मनाली में हुई दुर्घटना के संबंध में क्लैरिफिकेशंस होंगे जिस के लिए मंत्रीजी यहां उपस्थित हैं। वह उस का जवाब देंगे

श्री महेश्वर सिंह: तो आज ही यह चर्चा समाप्त होने वाली है और आज ही स्पष्टीकरण होगा?

श्री उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): आज ही होगा। इस के बाद एक और स्टेटमेंट मकबूल दर साहब का है जोकि उज्जैन और हरिद्वार में 15 जुलाई को हुई घटना के बारे में है। वह अपना स्टेटमेंट रखना चाहेंगे। तो आप के क्लैरीफिकेशंस के बाद दो मिनिट का उनका काम है। वह अभी अपना कार्य खत्म कर लेंगे। डा० वाई० लक्ष्मी प्रसाद अनुपस्थित। श्री गुरुदास दासगुप्त। श्री गुरुदास जी को ज्योतिष ने कहा है कि 5 मिनिट मत बोलिए, 7 मिनिट बोलिए। इसलिए उन्होंने 3 मिनिट का समय अधिक मांगा है। तीन मिनिट की जगह मैं तीन मिनिट और दूंगी। आप दस मिनिट बोलिए ताकि आप का समय अच्छा बीते।

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Madam Vice-Chairperson, I feel extremely distressed to speak against the decision of the Government even though I represent a party which is there in the Government. This is, after all, a coalition Government. Therefore, differences of opinion are bound to arise. We propose to sort out these differences through mutual discussions even if it is in the open because the country should know

how these coalition parties should agree or disagree while running the Government.

Madam, at the outset, I must say that the Govewrnment was led by — while taking the decision, of course — a perverse economic understanding and a totally arbitrary political assessment of the situation. This perverse economics and arbitrary politics has characterised the present decision of the Government.

Madam, while saying so, I must admit that there has been a total mismanagement of the economy over years — may be over decades — by the previous Government. There has been mismanagement of federal finance. There has been mismanagement of the Budget. There has been maladministration of the natural resources of the country. Therefore, in a way, the present decision makers can find satisfaction in calling it a legacy of the past. That may be a partial satisfaction. I have no hesitation in saying that those who have made the decision are in the minority. Those who have made the decision are in the minority; among those who are supporting the Government, who are in the Government and who are around the Government. Therefore, this is a minority decision of the Government. This should not have been made.

Madam, the position is very clear. The position is, a Government of coalition must run...

SHRI SOM PAL: It is again a painful fact of life that decisions are always taken by a minority but sanctioned by the majority. This, I request you, to do.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Now it is quite clear that the majority does not sanction the decision of the minority, at least in this particular case. The point is, this is a coalition Government and, therefore, it should have been run on the basis of consensus. Whenever you violate the principle of consensus, there is bound to be acrimony, and whenever there is acrimony, it is for a responsive Government to listen to reason. Whenever there is an acrimony, wherever there is a protest, wherever there is a criticism, it is for the responsive Government to listen to reason. By refusing to listen to reason, you were only doing wrong not only to the Government, but you are setting a wrong precedent so far as the running of a coalition Government is concerned.

The country must know how to run a coalition Government, the parties must know how to run a coalition Government. And the principles of coalition very objectively declare that there has to be consensus and consultation. Is it not true that there was no proper consultation at the important levels where the supporting parties are represented? I am compelled to tell the truth because my party does not want to share the burden of a wrong decision. But, Madam, this is the political price we are paying to keep this Government in power because we do not want that fundamentalist forces should come to power ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA (Bihar): You are not paying any price. It is the people of this country who are paying.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: We are paying the price to keep this Government in power in order to keep the fundamentalist forces out of power ...*(Interruptions)*...

Madam, let me go into economics. Economics is the very basis of political decision making. I do not know how the Government feels that the cascading effect of inflation should be around one per cent. What is the source of this survey and how has the Government come to know of it? The cascading effect of this price hike, according to the market prices of the country, on the average, is around 35 to 40 per cent—the cascading effect of the increase in the petroleum prices. There has been an increase in the bus fares, there has been an increase in the fares of the railways—even if it is 10 per cent only—there has been an increase in the cost of transportation, and there

has been an increase in the prices of all important essential commodities in the country. Therefore, this has fuelled the already existing double digit inflation.

This is an attack on the real standard of living of the millions of people, who we say; are living below the line of subsistence. This is an attack on the poverty stricken people, this is an attack on the middle class, this is an attack on the people who belong to the unorganized industry of the country. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, the decision that you have taken is itself a strong attack, a sharp attack, on the living standards of the common people.

Madam, poverty cannot be eliminated, social justice cannot be established and the poor cannot be given a fair deal if the prices are allowed to rise in the way it is being done. Therefore, it is an inauspicious beginning of the Government. The beginning of the Government has been totally inauspicious. I wish the Government looks into the matter. The Prime Minister, instead of taking a wrong position on so-called dignity, should rise to the occasion. His stature will only increase in the country if he decides to review the decision.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: We support you on this.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Madam, I have my reason to doubt the statistical figure being advanced by senior members of the Indian bureaucracy. I want to know what the actual deficit is in the Oil Pool Account. I want to know the transactions that have taken place in the Oil Pool Account in the last five years. I want to know whether money has been withdrawn and how the withdrawn money was utilised. I want to know what the additional revenue is going to be. I want to know whether the deficit that is being described as "too big to be overlooked", could have been carried over. Why, instead of carrying over the deficit, has the Government, with one stroke of decision, decided to pay for the deficit? What were the reasons?

Madam, these are important questions because never before was the hike so steep; never before was the magnitude so big and enormous; never before was the multiplier effect on the economy, particularly the price-level, so heavy and distressing. The decision has been taken in a huff. I say the Government has taken the decision in a huff, without consulting important personalities around the Government, without looking into the economics and without looking into the political fall-out of it.

Madam, the deficit that has been shown in the Oil Pool Account is in books. The important question is that the Oil Pool Account shows all book transactions. All book transactions can be manipulated in the way the person who manages the Account proposes to do. I say that this deficit could be carried forward. That does not mean that at a subsequent point of time you would be compelled to increase the price much more higher than what you have done. No. It could have been carried forward, and that could have been tackled in a different way. Unfortunately, the present Government is moving on the dotted line of the previous regime. There is a total disregard for public distress and a total disregard for the political situation.

Don't take anybody for granted. If the people of our country are taken for granted, you will not be able to fight fundamentalism nor will you be able to bring any change in the economic distress of the common people of the country. Without bringing any change, without bringing any material improvement in the living conditions of the people, you cannot fight fundamentalism. Ultimately, the strength of the Government depends on popular referendum. I say people are really angry with you. It is not that they have taken it lying down because there is no protest in the streets of Delhi or Calcutta. Since there is no protest demonstration or bandh call, please don't believe that the people have taken, and will take, it lying down.

Therefore, Madam, as a supporter of the Government, as a representative of the party represented in the Government, I call upon the Government to review this decision. You must review this decision.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: If they do not review it?

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: I am sorry that the Prime Minister did not think it prudent to be present in the House to answer questions that are being raised. This is not the way to deal with Parliament, at least the House of Elders.

Surely, this was not the way in which you should have increased the prices just on the eve of the Parliament Session.

Disrespect to Parliament is disrespect to democracy. Disrespect to Rajya Sabha is disrespect to the democratic process. For all practical purposes, the hon. Prime Minister or the hon. Finance Minister should have been here to listen to the questions and answered our points.

Sir, at the end I am sorry I had to be a little harsh. I am sorry that I had to be a little caustic, but I do this with a perfect intention so that changes take place in the decision-making process, so that the present pernicious process is not allowed to be carried forward. I hope he would change the decision after listening to the protests of the common people, after listening to the advice of his friends because by doing so he would only grow in stature and the strength of the United Front Government would be more than what it is now. Thank you, Madam.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI (Kerala): Madam, I want to seek one clarification.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Ravi, what is the clarification?

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Allow me for a minute. We have listened to the speech of Mr. Gurudas Das Gupta whose party is a constituent of the United Front Government. Just for information, who is owning this Government? Is anybody owning this Government?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): The people of this country. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, being a Member of the Cabinet he said like that. I congratulate him. I appreciate his courage.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Madam, let me make one point clear. Who is there for the Government? We are there for the Government. But we are against any wrong decision that the Government takes. It is an open democracy which we have started living in because this is a new situation, a new change in Indian democracy. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Don't teach us on how a Government functions?

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Mr. Narayanasamy, this Government is a foster-child.

श्रीमती आनन्दीबेन जेठाभाई पटेल (गुजरात): मैडम्, आपका आभार मानती हूं आपने समय दिया है। सरकार ने मंगलवार की रात से पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों की कीमतों में वृद्धि की। जो घोषणा की है उसका असर आम आदमी पर पड़ेगा और महंगाई बढ़ेगी। डीज़ल की कीमतें बढ़ने से सबसे ज्यादा असर किसानों पर भी पड़ने वाला है और फिर अनाज, दाल, सब्जियों आदि के भाव भी बढ़ेंगे। किसान बिजली से तो परेशान है ही और उसकी परेशानी में सरकार ने और बढ़ावा किया है। अभी अनेक सेवाओं में भी मूल्य वृद्धि होने की संभावना है। कल रेल मंत्री जी ने रेल बजट में रेल भाड़े में बढ़ोत्तरी की है। उससे और महंगाई बढ़ेगी। डाक, तार की दरों में भी वृद्धि होने की संभावना है। सरकार बजट का घाटा कम करने की दृष्टि से बजट पूर्व यह कदम उठा रही है। सरकार ने यह वायदा किया था कि सरकारी खर्चों में कटौती की जाएगी। लेकिन सरकारी खर्चों में कटौती की बात तो दूर रही लेकिन मूल्य वृद्धि जैसे [illegible] अपनाने पर आ गई। कौन भरोसा करेगा इस सरकार पर? काले धन पर अंकुश लगाने में सरकार को

सफलता नहीं मिलेगी और न ही सरकार बकाया राशि की वसूली कर पाएगी। यह स्वीकार करके ही पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों पर भाव बढ़ाए हैं। सर, भारत की जनता तो गाय है जिसे जब चाहो तब दूहो। अपने को प्रगतिशील और जनता का उदारक मानने वाली यह सरकार भी वही तौर-तरीके अपना रही है जो दूसरी सरकारों ने अपनाए। यदि रेल का भाड़ा, किराया बढ़ता है तो उसके साथ यात्रियों की सुख सुविधाएं बढ़ाई जाती है या नई रेल लाईनें बिछाई जाती हैं, तो किराया, भाड़ा बढ़ना ज्यादा नहीं खलेगा। इसी तरह यदि विकास के कुछ काम होते हैं तो महंगाई का भार भी किसी तरह लोग झेल लेते हैं। लेकिन जिस तरह पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों की कीमतों में वृद्धि की गई है उससे ऐसा नहीं लगता कि यह सरकार कोई नया रास्ता अपनाएगी। पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों की कीमतें बढ़ेंगी तो क्या सरकार गैस एजेंसी बढ़ाने का इरादा रखती है? अभी 15 दिनों में भी गैस नहीं मिलती है। गैस के सिलेंडर में पानी भी निकलता है। सिलेंडर वहां भरे हुए नहीं होते। 135 रुपए की जगह 200 से 250 रुपए सिलेंडर के देने पड़ते है। क्या इन सब शिकायतों को दूर करने का प्रयास यह सरकार करने वाली है?

मैडम, मैं यह जानना चाहती हूं कि क्या पूरे देश में आपने कोई समिति गठित की है जो यह पता लगाए कि कितने राज्यों में कितनी तहसीलों में गैस की एजेंसियां हैं? मैं जानती हूं कि गुजरात में खेड़ा और मेहसाना डिस्ट्रिक्ट में कई तहसीलें ऐसी हैं जहां गैस की एजेंसी नहीं है। गैस एजेंसी नहीं होने से गैस के लिए दस-पन्द्रह किलोमीटर दूर जाना पड़ता है फिर भी गैस नहीं मिलती है। गैस के ढाई सौ-तीन सौ रुपए देने पड़ते है। क्या आपको मालूम है कि पूरे देश में जितने रेग्युलर गैस कनेक्शन है उससे दोगुने इर्रेग्युलर गैस कनेक्शन हैं? क्या इन इर्रेग्युलर गैस कनेक्शन को रेग्युलर करने का निश्चय सरकार करेगी? हर हम०पी० को साल में दो गैस कनेक्शन के कूपन बुक मिलती है और यदि गैस की एजेंसी से सात किलोमीटर की दूरी पर गांव है तो गैस कनेक्शन दिया जाता है। क्या उसमें आप संशोधन करेंगे? 1996-97 में आप कितनी गैस एजेंसियां रिलीज़ करने वाले है? केन्द्र सरकार की नीति है कि गैस और पेट्रोल की ऐजेंसियां देश की रक्षा करते हुए शहीद हुए जवानों की विधवाओं को, अपंगों को दी जानी चाहिए। सरकार ने इस नीति का पालन नहीं किया है। गैस, पेट्रोल की एजेंसियां देने में कई गड़बड़ियां हुई हैं। तो क्या सरकार 1996-97 में इस नीति का पालन करेगी?

श्री उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): आनन्दी-
बेन....

श्रीमती आनन्दीबेन जेठाभाई पटेल: मैं एक मिनट में अपनी बात खत्म कर दूंगी।

श्री उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): मुझे आपके बोलने में कोई आपत्ति नहीं है। मुझे आपत्ति इस बात की है कि यह शॉर्ट ड्यूरेशन डिसक्शन जो है, यह प्री-बजट हाईक पैट्रोलियम प्रोडक्ट्स में जो हुई है, उसके बारे में है। आप उसके बारे में बोल रही हैं या गैस एजेंसियों के बारे में बोल रही हैं?

श्रीमती आनन्दीबेन जेठाभाई पटेल: गैस की कीमत बढ़ती है तो उससे होने वाली दिक्कतों को भी शामिल करना चाहिए। गुजरात में अहमदाबाद में तीन गैस ऐजेंसियां बंद कर दी गई हैं। अब गैस धारक कहां जाए? दूसरी गैस वाले देने में देर करते हैं, गृहिणी को गैस नहीं मिलती है। गैस कंपनियों की यह गड़बड़ी दूर करने के लिए क्या सरकार प्रतिबद्ध है?

मैडम, पैट्रोलियम पदार्थों में बढ़ोत्तरी अर्थव्यवस्था और आम आदमी की जेब के हिसाब से अस्वास्थ्यकर है। इस प्रचार में जाने की कोई जरूरत नहीं है कि अंतर्राष्ट्रीय बाजार में तेल की कीमतें बढ़ी हैं। असलियत यह है कि बार-बार हुए रुपए के अवमूल्यन और एक गलत परिवहन नीति ने हमारी गैस निर्यात का बजट बढ़ाया है। पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों की खपत बढ़ रही है। पेट्रोल, डीज़ल की गुणवत्ता कम होने से पर्यावरण को भी भारी नुकसान हो रहा है। क्या सरकार पेट्रोल डीज़ल की गुणवत्ता में सुधार लाने का प्रयास करेगी? सीसामुक्त पेट्रोल, अल्पगंधक मात्रा वाला डीज़ल तैयार करने वाली योजना पर निगरानी रखने की भी आवश्यकता है। मैं पेट्रोलियम पदार्थों में हुई मूल्य-वृद्धि का कड़ा विरोध करती हूं और मूल्य-वृद्धि वापस लेने का अनुरोध करती हूं। धन्यवाद।

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Thank you. Now, Mr. Fernandes *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Madam Vice-Chairman, before Mr. Fernandes speaks, may I know how many more speakers are there?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Seven more speakers are there.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Seven more! the Prime Minister is not here. Will he be able to come to reply? *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI T. R. BAALU: I am here to reply.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: No, no. He has to reply. It is an insult to the Rajya Sabha. He replied in the Lok Sabha *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI T. R. BAALU: What is wrong in it? *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: He is in charge of the Petroleum Ministry. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Madam, the point is, the Prime Minister who is the Cabinet Minister of Petroleum replied to the questions raised by Members in the Lok Sabha. And the normal convention in this House is that when a Cabinet Minister responds to the questions raised by the ...*(Interruptions)*. Till yesterday, Mr. Bommai was raising here the issue that I am raising today. He must understand the consequences of this and he should call the Prime Minister to reply to the questions raised by the hon. Members of the Rajya Sabha. If it is not possible today, it may be taken up later on, tomorrow or on Monday. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Without any disrespect to my colleague, Mr. Baalu, we would like to hear the Prime Minister. If he is not here, then there will be problems. He may come tomorrow or day after tomorrow. I don't mind.

SHRI T. R. BAALU: I could only say that I cannot compel the hon. Prime Minister to come over here. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: If it is so, then it should be adjourned and the next item relating to clarifications should be taken up. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: We are not compelling you to tell the Prime Minister. The House is demanding that the Prime Minister should be here.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Without any disrespect to you and to your competence. Mr. Minister, this is our submission.

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S. R. BOMMAI): Madam, let the discussion be completed.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: That we can do. Still, there are seven speakers. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI S. R. BOMMAI: We will convey the feelings of the hon. Members of this House to the Prime Minister. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: This is important. If it cannot be concluded today, then what is the fun?

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: I think both things can be done. We can continue with the seven speakers today. The Minister will be taking notes. I am sure. He will not down the suggestions of other Members also and tomorrow, at some stage, if the Prime Minister cannot come today, he should come and give the reply. Maybe, because this is an issue on which all sections of the House have been agitated in one way or the other, it is proper for the Prime Minister to come and give the reply. But, at the same time we should allow the Minister of State for Petroleum to have his say. While saying that the Prime Minister should come, that does not mean that the Minister of State for Petroleum should not speak. Let us hear him. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I never said so. Naturally, the dignity of the Upper House demands that if the Prime Minister has replied to the debate in that House, he should reply to the debate in this House also and if that does not seem to be possible today ...*(Interruptions)* it can be taken up tomorrow.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): This is a very

good suggestion and I also would like to request all the Members that they should be very, very brief so that all the speakers complete their speeches today itself and the reply may be given by the Minister or the Prime Minister tomorrow. That will be more appropriate and then immediately after this we can taken up the clarifications relating to the Ministry of Civil Aviation.

SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: No, Madam. The demand from the House is that the Prime Minister should respond to the questions. Don't give that direction, Madam.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Ahluwalia, you did not hear what direction I am giving to the House. I know that. What Mr. Agarwal said, I understood that. He personally came and requested me that we would like to listen to the reply from the Prime Minister. When the Prime Minister is not here. I cannot ask him to go and request the Prime Minister to come to this House to reply. Now, the Prime Minister has come and the problem is solved. So, I think we should continue the discussion. The hon. Prime Minister is here to reply to your queries and questions.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa): Madam, I am fortunate that the hon. Prime Minister is here to hear me and I would start. *(Interruptions)*.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Agarwal, you wanted the Prime Minister to be present in the House to reply to the debate. He is very much here. Now, why are you delaying the whole thing?

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: I am making a request to the hon. Prime Minister because whatever substantial points have been made in this House, the hon. Prime Minister would naturally like to be apprised of those points by his Minister. So, if it is not inconvenient to him, he can reply tomorrow. The debate may be concluded today.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): But why? If the Prime Minister is ready to reply today, he can reply today also. There is no question of tomorrow. *(Interruptions)* Since the Prime Minister is ready, so there is no question of leaving it for tomorrow. Let us leave it to the Prime Minister. We have not sent a message for him to come to this House.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H. D. DEVE GOWDA): Madam, I have come on my own.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): He has come with all the preparation to reply to the points raised by you.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES: Madam, the price hike of petroleum products was certainly a shocking dose to this country. I do not know what magic wand the Congress party is holding. The last major price rise was done in October 1990 when they effected an increase of 23 per cent and Mr. Som Pal's Government was in power at that time and the second dose of 25 per cent to 30 per cent came on 2nd of July, 1996 when the Congress Government was not in power. Therefore, I say that I do not know what miracle the Congress party can do to this country when it is in the Government. This is to be condemned outright. Though we are supporting this Government from outside, no political party will appreciate the decision which hurts the common man, the poorest of the poor in this country. Though the people do not own their vehicles or any mode of transport but it will affect every one because the moment you increase the prices of petroleum products, that will automatically affect every commodity in this country.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Try to be brief.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES: I am trying to be very brief, Madam.

So, I feel that it is totally an anti-people move. We have seen that the

Government has reduced the price of diesel from 30 per cent to 15 per cent and the main consumer of diesel is the Government sector undertakings; it is the railways, it is the transport sector because the Government owns very many transport sectors, public sector undertakings, and it will not benefit the common man because finally the entire burden will also be passed on the common man. It is the Government trade which is affected, the railways, the truck transport, the road transport and the civil aviation. Madam, the Government justifies that there is a deficit of Rs. 9,700 crores and they want to mop up at least this amount within the next nine months, but at the same time they say that the total Oil Pool Account deficit is Rs. 5,700 crores and by this hike they will recover only Rs. 2,000 crores. Still there is going to be a deficit. I do not know what steps the Government is going to take further to alleviate this deficit in the Oil Pool Account.

Madam, every time we find we do not have a comprehensive transport policy with the Government. The roads of Delhi are dumped with about two million cars and there is no proper policy before this Government and we only blame the petrol price or the Oil Pool Account. What is the quantum of petrol consumed for the last five years? In 1991-92 the rate of growth was about 3.5, and it will be shocking to see that now in 1995-96 it is 9.5. The escalation is almost 75 per cent. So, we have totally failed to see that more and more licences are not issued to the manufacturers of vehicles because there is no proper planning. Somewhere there is a gap in our planning. Unless we come forward with a comprehensive transport policy, things would not improve. Again, our road conditions are so bad; I am told that there is a report from the Ministry of Surface Transport that we are wasting about Rs. 2,000 crores on petrol p.a. The conditions of our roads are very bad. Unless we plug these loopholes—we consume the petroleum products without giving any thought to the other infrastructural facilities available in the country, we will not come to any solution to this problem.

Madam, the courts, again and again, have to intervene. The other day, the hon. Supreme Court has rightly given a decision that our vehicles are totally obsolete and outdated; they create pollution, they consume a lot of petroleum products. The Supreme Court has also advised that the companies manufacturing two-wheelers and three-wheelers should be revamped and they should be modernised. I feel that the Government has no comprehensive policy to see that something is done about this.

Coming to inflation, Madam, at the moment the inflation is 4.7 per cent. Last time when Mr. Sompal's Government gave the Budget to us, it was 17.6 per cent, and we brought it down to 4.7 per cent. Thanks to the liberalisation policy of Dr. Manmohan Singh. There is a dispute within the Government itself. The Ministry of Petroleum feels that with this price-hike the inflation will rise by one to two per cent and the Ministry of Finance says that it will rise by two to three per cent. I do not know who is to be believed. Madam, there is no doubt that there is going to be an increase in inflation.

Again, we have to have a comprehensive policy and see that we do not burn fuel. For example, we have an Open Sky Policy under which we have allowed the private air-taxi operators and we are wasting the seats because there is a duplication. The hon. Minister of Civil Aviation is also here. They have allowed that without any planning because on certain trunk routes there are three-four flights operating from different airlines and in the bargain we are wasting about 40 per cent of seats. They are going vacant and in the bargain we burn the scarce resources of the nation, *i.e.* the fuel.

Unless the Government has a policy of seat-pooling and a comprehensive policy to deter the agencies from wasting the

fuel which we buy by paying hard currency, I don't think anything will happen in this country. (*Time bell*) I am just concluding, Madam. You hardly gave me two or three minutes.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Your party is given totally 57 minutes.

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES: Okay, I will conclude, Madam. The hon. Prime Minister is here. He is a man of the common people. I think he has already brought down the price of diesel oil. I think the Government will make an announcement and see to it that the price of petroleum is reduced by 50%. This is what is anticipated, Madam. With these few words I request the Government to respond to the situation immediately.

SHRI M.P. ABDUSSAMAD SAMADANI (Kerala): Madam, so much is said about this serious matter.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): The total time given to all other parties is 12 minutes. There are five Members before me. So, please be brief.

SHRI M.P. ABDUSSAMAD SAMADANI: I am going to take very little time, Madam. This tragic issue has two aspects. The first aspect is the Government's decision. The second is the justification of the Government. The first thing is that it is a wrong decision. The wrong decision is justified in a harsh manner. It is quite unfortunate that the Government is justifying the hike in the price of petroleum products. It is going to give birth to many unhealthy trends in the economy. The hike has given a deathblow to the common people of this country. It is a fact that the entire country is agitated over the policy of the Government in this regard. It is well known that the rise in the price of fuel will affect the price of each and every commodity which is connected with the modern man's life on earth. Therefore, the Government's decision is going to influence each and every sphere of day-to-day expenditure. The travelling fare has gone up, on air, rail and sea. It is this harsh decision which is criticised by almost everybody. The economists have already pointed out that as a result of the hike there will be an increase of 6% in the prices in the coming September. The people of this country are going to face a difficult situation on account of a price rise with regard to preliminary consumer goods. The cost of production has already become high after this hike. There is also a chance for a rise in the price of crude oil also. The consequences of this will be more serious. Certain State Governments have increased the price of electricity. The rise in the price of oil and electricity may compel the Railways also to think of an increase in the charges. The inflation rate by the end of the year may be as high as 8% to 8.5%. The Government can, in the present circumstances, do either of the two things, that is, to adjust the administrative prices or to print additional currency. But both will lead to inflation. The inflation process will give birth to the relative price increase. The relative price increase caused by demand-pull inflation hurts the poor the most. Heavy taxation comes as a counterpart of this. Therefore, the best method that the Government can adopt to rectify the imbalance is to revive administrative prices. Almost all the political parties in the country have vehemently protested against the Government's policy. Even those parties who are inside the Government and those who are supporting the Government from outside, cutting across political barriers, have joined the mass protest. In spite of the protest, we don't know why the Government is so adamant in its stand. Even if the hike was unavoidable, the Government could have done it after making urgent necessary arrangements to avoid its impact on the prices of basic commidities. Instead of trying to treat the causes of the illness the Government is trying to cure the symptoms. There are capitalist groups, who are trying to escape from taxes, in our country. Instead of harassing the poor,

let us collect the taxes from the rich. *(Time bell)* I am going to conclude, Madam. To bridge the gaping hole in the oil pool deficit, the Government has to make serious efforts. They have to make serious efforts to bridge the fiscal deficit. The ways include increasing direct and indirect taxes, bettering the financial position of the PSUs and reducing expenditure. The claim of the Government that the price hike will affect the rich not the poor, is utterly baseless. Nobody is going to believe this kind of an unjust justification of a wrong decision. I request the Prime Minister, who is present in the House, to review this decision and correct it. Thank you.

SHRIMATI URMILABEN CHIMANBHAI PATEL (Gujarat): Madam, I am sorry to say that the price hike is being discussed here by the hon. Members only from the economic point of view, but the social effect of the price rise is not being discussed at all. If the price of any commodity is hiked, the sufferers are the women and children and the middle class families. The cut comes on the amount spent on women and children especially for their education and on the amount spent for the health services and other facilities given to the family members. I would like to mention that the family structure of our society is, one member of the family, mainly the male member, earns the livelihood and the woman manages the house. The fixed income or salary that the man brings every month is handed over to the woman, who may be a mother or a wife or someone else, to manage the house. She has to maintain the whole family with this fixed income that is given to her. As you know, the income does not increase in proportion to the rise in prices. So the income remains the same but the expenditure increases. Naturally there will be cuts on the family requirements. The social structure is also going through a change. The middle class is day by day increasing. The poor people are trying to come up to the level of lower middle class and the lower middle class is trying to come up to the level of middle class. Now the middle class people and the lower middle class people come from poor class. They want to live with better standards of living. The middle class has now started imitating the upper middle class. So petroleum, diesel and LPG are such commodities that are used by the common man and the middle class of our society and this price rise will affect the middle class families and lower middle class families. It will also hamper the development of our society. Our industry is using diesel and petrol and our farming community is also using diesel. This price rise will affect them directly. It is also an infrastructure facility for development. It is believed that the middle class, the lower middle class and the poor people do not use LPG and petrol. I would like to bring to your notice that kerosene is also not freely available. When kerosene prices are not increased, kerosene will be used to adulterate petrol or it will be used as a substitute for petrol; hence, it will not be available for the women for use at home. There will be shortage of kerosene also. So, I would like to impress upon this House that there should be a reduction in the price of gas and petrol. I would like to suggest some other steps that the Government can take instead of resorting to price hike. We should take steps to reduce the import of petrol and diesel so that we do not have to draw money from our foreign exchange reserves. Encouragement should be given to economise and reduce the use of petrol, gas and diesel. At the time of war with pakistan, we were faced with shortage of food and we needed foreign exchange. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri appealed to the people of the country to save food and miss a meal if necessary and the whole country had responded to him. In the same way we can ask the people to economise the use of petrol, diesel and gas. We can ask the people to restrict the use of cars. I would earnestly request the hon. Prime Minister and the Government to reduce the price hike as this would affect the middle-class, the women and the children. I think the

prices should be reduced to substantial levels. I appeal to the Government on behalf of women, the children and the middle-class. Thank You, Madam.

SHRI S. MUTHU MANI (Tamil Nadu): Madam, I rise to speak on the pre-Budget hike in the prices of petrol and other petroleum products on behalf of the AIADMK. It is a matter of sorrow that the first major decision of the United Front Government has gone against the interests of the common man. On the one hand the Government has violated Parliamentary propriety by hiking the prices only a couple of days before the Budget session of Parliament and on the other hand it has not taken into account the burden the poor people would have to bear as a result of this hike. As it is, very little has been done to reduce the prices of essential commodities. Since, all essential commodities have to be transported, the hike in petrol prices will only increase the prices of these commodities. The Government keeps saying that it is doing a lot for bettering the conditions of the common man. The hon. Prime Minister has been making promises to uplift the poor in the country. But I wish to ask the Government a simple question. Does not the hiking of the prices of petroleum products run contrary to your decision to bring down the prices in the interest of the poor? The Government has been repeatedly saying that the Oil Pool Reserve has dwindled so badly that it is left with no option but to increase the prices so as to ensure continued import of crude oil. It is also said that the previous Government withdrew Rs. 4000 crores from this reserve resulting in the present predicament. It seems that the Government has a narrow-minded view on the use of petrol and diesel in the country. The Government thinks that the rich people who own and use cars are not affected by these hikes. But this is not a fact. Even they are affected in a small way. But such people constitute only a microscopic minority. All the goods including the essential commodities used in both cities and rural areas have to be transported. And it is the cost of transportation which plays a major role in fixing the prices of goods. That is why the prices of vegetables, pulses and cereals have sky-rocketed in the last two weeks. The women are the worst affected because with the limited resources that they are getting as in the past, they have to manage the household amidst this all-round price rise. Then, the use of LPG cylinders is no more restricted to the rich people and those living in cities alone. Today the people belonging to the lower-middle class and even the labourers living in the rural areas use gas-stoves because of the non-availability of firewood and because of the acute scarcity of kerosene. Even before the price hike, these people were paying through their nose for a gas cylinder because of the necessity. Now the price of a gas cylinder has been increased by over thirty rupees. I believe that this Government is unaware of the repercussions of this hike. As a trade unionist, I meet people every day and I know their sentiments and problems very well. On account of the increase in the price of gas cylinders, many people have switched over to other unhygienic methods of cooking. The tragedy is that they need gas cylinders very much but they cannot afford to pay the exorbitant rate. I want to ask the Government whether by increasing the price of gas cylinders the Government intends to discourage the use of gas-stoves. If the Government is sincere in its commitment to help the poor, it should forthwith roll back the prices of petrol and petroleum products. The price of LPG cylinders should be reduced to the pre-hike price level. If the Government needs resources for the Oil Pool Account, as my learned hon. colleague, Shri Agarwal, has said, it should find some other way out in consultation with the Planning Commission and the Reserve Bank of India. So, Madam, on behalf of the common people of India, through you, I urge upon the hon. Prime Minister, who is present here, to announce in this House that the prices of petrol and

petroleum products will be reduced from today onwards. Thank you, Madam.

DR. B.B. DUTTA (Nominated): Madam Vice-Chairman, this debate on the petroleum products price hike is being widely participated in by so many Members and that shows the concern of the Members representing various nooks and corners of our country. Madam, many points have been mentioned in favour of the price hike and many more points have been made opposing the price hike. I would like to urge upon the Government, the parties in power today, to take a very dispassionate view instead of trying to apportion the blame and instead of trying to say that for the last 30 months there had not been any price hike and that there ought to have been some increase in the petroleum products prices. Instead, they should try to understand whether there are any options. If we seriously address ourselves to cultivate those options, we can very well reduce the prices a little more and give some relief to the poor. The hon. Member, Shri Som Pal, argued earlier that the backward people in the rural areas do not use the LPG for cooking. They do use it. Of course, many people do not use it. But the fact remains that with every successive month, more and more people are going in for LPG for cooking and this is so even in the so-called backward areas. We are also encouraging them to go in for it because we do not want they should destroy the environment, that they should cut down forests and use wood as the fuel. This is the policy towards the protection of environment. This is the economic policy as well. So, we want them to switch over to electricity, gas and oil.

6.00 P.M. This is a national policy which is being pursued vigrously. Now we should not go back. Can we say to a poor man, "Don't use LPG. You remain where you were"? This cannot be the argument. Som Palji missed one point very much. He questioned if poor people were using petrol or LPG, etc. Let me tell him that these people consume commodities which are transported by vehicles. And these vehicles use either petrol or diesel. Even these poor people don't use petrol diesel, etc. directly the vehicles which make the goods available to them use petrol, diesel, etc. The hike in petroleum products, is, thus, sure to reflect in the prices of the essential commodities.

There are many areas in this vast country—hilly areas, difficult terrains, backward areas—where railways cannot reach even though it is the cheapest mode of transport. The other mode so as to reach these far-off places is road transport. The increase in the petroleum products is already having a telling effect on the poor people, the hilly people, the backward people. They have already started feeling the pinch of the hike. Take, for instance, the case of North-East. I presume that in the North-East, as also in some other areas of the country, the poor people, the backward people are very much affected. But the Secretary of the Ministry of Petroleum says that even after 30% hike in the prices of petroleum products, the increase in the inflation rate is not more than 1.2 per cent. I don't know on what basis he could do that calculation! But I can inform this august House that in the North-East, where I come from, inflation has already gone up by 4-5 per cent because this is an area where competition is very low. You have first hiked the price of diesel by 30% and then reduced it by 15 per cent. But the reduction has not been able to reflect itself in the already increased prices. The traders are saying that even though the price of diesel is reduced by 15%, prices of other commodities have gone up. The increased prices have remained the same principally because there is no competition in the area. The retailers increased the prices after the hike in the petroleum products and they are not interested to reduce them even after the decrease in the price of diesel. Ultimately it is the people who are very much affected.

The previous Government had laid a great emphasis on anti-poverty programmes. More than Rs. 30,000 crores was allocated for poverty alleviation programmes. The present Government has also laid a great emphasis on continuing these anti-poverty programmes. The hon. Prime Minister himself elicited the views of the Chief Ministers in the recently held Chief Ministers' Conference as to how benefits could be extended to the rural people, the backward people of our country. The Chief Ministers were very much impressed with his concern. Close on the heels of this came the hike in the prices of petroleum products. This shows that you are giving with one hand a lot of money for poverty alleviation and are taking it away with the other hand. It is a big pick-pocketing which you are doing through various hikes.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Please conclude now.

DR. B.B. DUTTA: Madam, please bear with me. We don't frequently speak because we don't get a chance to speak very often.

SHRI MD. SALIM: Madam, is it a Short Duration discussion?

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I wish it were. But I cannot help it, Mr. Salim. It is actually a Short Duration discussion. It is being turned into a long duration discussion...

DR. B.B. DUTTA:...because the matter is so vital. Millions of people are being subjected to this unseen pick-pocketing. The hikes are a great strain on their limited resources. On the one hand you say that you injecting an increased purchasing power and on the other, you are increasing the prices of all commodities. This is the *tamasha* that is taking place now. In manipulating an economic variable, we have to ensure that we do it slowly and by small doses, not by a sudden big jump. That badly affects the whole structure. For the last 30 months, the previous Government did not increase the prices of petroleum products. There is no reason why on that ground alone, there should be such a steep hike in the petroleum products. It gives a very great shock to the poor people. It dislocates many things. I am not going to argue any further on this.

I appeal to the Government, to the hon. Prime Minister who is sitting here, to have a second thought on the hike in the prices of petroleum products. Mr. Satish Agarwal has made a masterly presentation. Salveji and Dipankar also made the debate a rich one. It is highly educative and enlightening. What I would like to impress upon the hon. Prime Minister through you is that he should have a second consideration because poor people, people in rural areas, backward people, people in outlying areas, people in inaccessible areas, people in the isolated North-East are very, very badly affected. And, then come the floods and the prices soar further. Hoarding and all such things are going on. So, please have a second consideration and try to reduce the prices of petroleum products, the prices of L.P.G. a little more. This is my submission, Madam. Thank you.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Shri Joy Nadukkara.

श्री संजय डालमिया: मैडम, हम लोगों को टाइम नहीं मिलेगा? हमारा 4 मिनिट बाकी है।

श्री उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): चार मिनिट किसी का भी बाकी नहीं है। मेरे सामने जो ऑफिसियल लिस्ट है, उस में जितने नाम थे, मैंने सब को मौका दिया है।

I can't add anymore name now in the list. Please go ahead, Mr. Nadukkara.

SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA (Punjab): Madam, my name is second...

श्री उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): यह तो मुझे नहीं मालूम।

SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA: Kindly check it from the list. My name is there in the list.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE) : I have already explained to you the position. Please don't waste my time and the time of the House because I have already explained to you the position. Whatever official list is before me, I am calling the Members from this list. I have not added and I have not omitted anybody's name from the list. Please don't waste the time of the House.

Nadukkaraji, please go ahead. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI JOY NADUKKARA (Kerala): Thank you, Madam.

I am participating in this discussion on hike in prices of petroleum products. I must say that I am in a genuine doubt as to who is taking decisions for this Government. It is true that it is a coalition Government and in a democratic set up coalition Governments are possible. Somebody on the previous day was saying that we are following a system of transparent democracy. Today I heard that it is an open democracy. Be it a transparent democracy or an open democracy or even an iron-curtained democracy, Even in transparent democracy or in open democracy, a coalition Government means that the partners in the Government are responsible for its decisions. A coalition Government does not mean that the partners can be irresponsible and not responsible for decisions. We cannot allow anybody to take the fruits of the rule and some people evade responsibilities and liabilities. If this is the attitude of the partners of the United Front, then my appeal to the Prime Minister is, please stop it here and don't drag it on further. It is true that a decision was taken by the Government for increasing the prices of petroleum products—petrol, diesel and cooking gas. Everybody is opposing it. I am also opposing it. We are not opposing it on political grounds. I think, even the B.J.P. is also not opposing it on political grounds. We are opposing it because this decision has affected injuriously the interests of the people.

Madam, the worst affected area is Kerala. I come from that State. The first call protesting against this decision came from Kerala. The autos, the taxis, the public carriers, all vehicles were kept away from the streets. Bombay and Delhi followed. This decision has caused increase in prices of essential commodities also. Unfortunately, ours is a State which is called a consumer State. We are dependent on other States even for vegetables. We are getting all consumer articles from other States. So, the transport is an essential thing there. When prices of these petroleum products increase, the fares of lorries and trucks will naturally be increased. That will affect the prices of all the essential commodities. Yesterday, the Railway Minister decided to increase the freight charges of goods trains. So, it will affect each and every State. Everybody will be affected by this hike in prices. Madam, when some journalists approached and asked our Prime Minister as to why Kerala was not represented in his Ministry, he told them that he is there to represent Kerala. So, I am making an appeal to the person who is representing Kerala, to the Prime Minsiter who is representing Kerala, that this decision must be changed. He must be bold and courageous enough to change that decision. We must reconsider it and reduce the prices of all commodities to a reasonable level. Thank you very much, Madam.

SHRI JOYANTA ROY (West Bengal): Madam, Vice-chairperson, probably I am the last speaker to speak on this issue. A lot of useful debate has taken place on price hike. There is no doubt that most educative speeches have been delivered by stalwarts like Satish Agarwal, N.K.P. Salve and Dipankar Mukherjee. Naturally, I don't want to raise any

new point here. I would like to say that it is very much unfortunate to enhance the price of petroleum products just before the commencement of Parliament session on 10th of this month. I think it is a question of propriety because the Budget Session of Parliament mainly deals with financial matter. The open commitment of this Government towards transparency, towards setting up of a new model of governance in place of the old one does not comply with the attitude and means through which the price hike has been resorted to. Madam, several times our Prime Minister announced that this Government is for the poor, that this Government is for the havenots and they are for transparency and setting up of a new model of governance in place of the old one, but what do we find here? All of a sudden, just before the commencement of the Budget Session of parliament, the prices have been hiked. I think it is not proper. It is not proper and the people of this country want that this decision should be reviewed. We also want a review of this decision.

Madam, the point is this. How and why it became essential for the Government to make such an abrupt price hike? That point has been very clearly explained here by Shri Satish Agarwal and Shri Dipankar Mukherjee. We cannot bear the pain which the millions of toiling masses of this country are bearing due to this unwarranted price hike. This decision of the Government should be reviewed. We cannot share this inhuman decision. I would rather say that it is a lashing given to the people of India. Therefore, I would request the Prime Minister, through you, Madam, that this decision should be reviewed. This abrupt price hike should be reviewed to give relief to the people of India, particularly the toiling masses of our country. Thank you, Madam,

SHRI ADHIK SHIRODKAR (Maharashtra): Madam, Chairperson, I rise to oppose this price hike and in doing so I associate myself with the thoughts expressed by Mr. Narayanasamy, Mr. Gupta, and particularly Mr. Satish Agarwal. He has given facts and figures and has relied upon documents which are authentic and which destroy the perverted logic of the Government in justifying the price hike. It cannot be justified. It is heartening to note that both the hon. Member belonging to the party in power and the hon. Member supporting the Government from outside, have found themselves in the shoes of Hamlet. They do not know "to be" or "not to be"—to be in the Government or not to be in the Government, to be continuing to support or not to be continuing to support is the dilemma before them. I hope they withdraw the support. Mr. Gupta said that he is supporting out of compulsion of avoiding fundamentalist party coming to power. This is the bogie of their own creation. It is no decision. Their leader, the hon. Home Minister's certain observation made yesterday in this august House speaks of this bogie. But, coming to the problem. Madam Chairperson., it is a fallacy of financial management if one thinks that the only way to managae the finance is to increase prices; this is erroneous. But, it has been done in the past. Also, never in the history of this country has the price been so vindictive and so punitive. The only answer will be that it will have a cascading effect which also will be punitive and vindictive. The cascading effect, which Mr. Gupta referred to, will be 30—40%; that is a very conservative estimate.

Madam Chairperson, we have realised while playing in the river—there is a very beautifully flowing river—that is a stone is thrown, it creates ripples. These go on enlarging in diameter. The cascading effect is also like ripples in the river which will create a disastrous economy. The only way it can be done is the way the hon. Member, Shri Satish Agarwal has suggested: There has to be a monitoring of the method of creating petroleum products, marketing them and doing the

effective management. There has been a reference to the flaring up of gas. Is this Government aware that the gas which is flared up and wasted is a basic raw product for a product called Polybutene, an industrial additive, which we have been importing by paying dollars? Now, at least that gas can be used for this purpose.

In the ultimate analysis the question is: How do we go on with the matter? The way in which the prices can be controlled is not by creating a definite pattern of increasing the prices. That is not the way of managing it. The moment you go on doing it becomes a vicious circle. The price rise of the petroleum products will increase the price of the consumer products; the increase in the prices of consumer products will make the people demand for an increase in their wages; the moment there are increased wages, it will again come back to the same vicious circle and there will be, again, a price rise. Please consider this basic law in approaching finance. Therefore, I request the hon. Prime Minister, through you, Madam, not to stand on prestige. Please do not stand on false notions of dignity. You have put forward a wrong foot in the beginning. Please withdraw that foot and change. Withdraw price hike and take the blessings of the millions of people of this country.

Thank you, Madam.

THE PRIME MINISTER (SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA): Hon. Vice-Chairperson, today I have to discharge an unpleasant duty. I know as Prime Minister of this country, the numerical strength of my party, I know the parties which are supporting-parties and I know the parties which are in this coalition Ministry. I also know the stand of each political party. That is why I would like to make this remark at the beginning that I have to play a very unpleasant role. Madam, I would like to make it clear that when the decision to increase the adminstered prices was taken, it was not done with any joy or—what I would like to say—without understanding the implications. I have not taken the decision without understanding the implications of it. I do understand the implications of this decision which was taken. Under what circumstance did we take this decision? Foreget for a moment that this is a minority Government, that this Government has no moral strength and that this Government has no numerical strength. Why only that; I am not a Member of either House. As Prime Minister, I am not a Member of this House or off that House. I was asked to shoulder this responsibility under special circumstances, because of political compulsions. I would like to make this point very clear. I have not come from Bangalore searching for a job here. My people had given me a mandate. It was not at the mercy of anybody that I had been running the State of Karnataka for 18 months. I was Cheif Minister of that State with my own party's mandate. I was Chief Minister of Karnataka and nobody asked me to go from Bangalore to Delhi. Let me make this point very clear. In my position, if I have taken a decision because of the political atmosphere, do not try to jump to any conclusion. How many times had there been a hike in the administered prices after Independence? I have got all the figures with me. The adminstered prices have been increased 18 times since 1978. And out of the 18 times, 17 times it had been done before the Budget was to be placed before the House. The exalted Chair has also given a ruling on this on several occasions. I would give statistics. There is no question of blaming anybody here. Let us know the realities. Let us not blame each other. It is not going to bring any results. Madam Vice-Chairperson, I would like to draw the attention of this House without attributing any motives to anybody—I do not want to attribute motives to anybody—and say, pleas
like to draw the attention of the august House to the facts. Somebody said that it was not proper, somebody talked about the propriety of the Government. About the Government which was there for

about 20 days or 25 days or 15 days, I do not want to comment on that. What are the compelling reasons? What are the circumstances? There is a note submitted by the Ministry of Petroleum to the then Finance Minister. The Finance Minister says: "It is noted that the MOPNG's OEB 1996-97 proposals entail an additional deficit of Rs. 6,000 crores on the Oil Pool Account during 1996-97 over and above the cummulative deficit of Rs. 5,700 crores at the end of the financial year at the end of 1995-96. MOPNG were requested to indicate how the deficit in the pool account was proposed to be tackled. *Prima facie*, it seems inevitable that an accross-the-board increase in POL prices is required urgently to eliminate the pool deficit. *(Interruptions)* As I told you this is a minority Government. I admit. As I told you I am not a Member of either of the Houses. As per the Constitution I have six months to get elected to the Parliament for six months I can discharge my responsibilities then let us see. Don't worry about that. What did the former Prime Minister write? Please don't be under the impression that debating this issue is going to change the scenario of the economic situation of this country. We have to discharge our duty. The people have sent us to this House or the other House to perform our responsibility. I do agree. Had I been in your position I would have criticised more bitterly. That is the responsibility cast on us and we are performing our duty. But at the same time whoever may be in this place has to take the same unpleasant decision. Nobody should forget that. The former Finance Minister also observed that the cummulative oil pool deficit is going to rise to a level of Rs. 11,700 crores at the end of this year from the level of Rs. 5,700 crores last year. As such across-the-board increase in POL prices is required urgently to eliminate the pool deficit, while action on this point shall be taken separately. The OEB as approved by the Finance Minister is submitted for the approval by the hon. Prime Minsiter." This was on 24.5.1996. The then Prime Minister had approved it on the file. This is not a secret document. I know about official secrecy to some extent. Let us discuss these issues frankly. I would just like to say under what circumstances the then Prime Minister had taken the decision. I do not want to blame the then Prime Minister. Let us go back to the events, why he had taken that decision. I am not going to say that he had taken the decision wrongly. The Chairmen of the Oil Refineries had sent several letters to the Secretary, Ministry of Petroleum, about the liquidity constraints. Somebody had asked, "Why can't you borrow from the market?" This point had been made by my colleague. Chairmen of Oil Companies have explained about the liquidity position and about the implications in case the price rise is not going to be effected. They had written a series of letters to the Govenment. I am not going to quote all those letters. I would just mention one or two points for the consideration of this House. "We are afraid"—this was on 1st July, 1996—"if the situation continues, IOC may be under a great stress to default its foreign commitments, for imports as well as loan repayments which will adversely affect its credibility in the international market". This is not my letter. These were the circumstances under which the previous Prime Minister, even though he was there for 15 days or 20 days, had to take that decision. I am not trying to find fault with the decision, I am just narrating the circumstances before this House. I can quote several letters. Again I quote: "I would like to reiterate that the liquidiy constraints have arisen in IOC are mainly due to the blocking of funds in the oil pool account and if timely action is not taken, the situation could become grave and IOC will experience serious constraints in meeting its payment obligations to the international oil suppliers and banks" What was the actual financial situation on that day? I will just give the figures. This is very important. How much was the borrowing of the oil companies as on 1st

July 1996? The figures were as follows: IOC—Rs. 9,349 crores; HPCL—Rs. 674 crores; BPCL—Rs. 515 crores; MRL—Rs. 782 crores; CRL—Rs. 282 crores; IBP—Rs. 308 crores; Total—Rs. 11,910 crores.

Last year, there was an emergency shutdown of the Mathura Refinery for two weeks. What was the situation at that time? In the entire Northern Region, there was so much of hue and cry. One refinery was closed for two weeks. What was the situation? Most of the senior Members of this august House might have experienced that. I do not want to elaborate on this by giving more explanations, even though I can give several other instances.

I would, here, refer to what the former Finance Minister has said. This appeared in the 'Times of India'. "The inflation rate, he asserted, had been artificially kept low by the previous Government by not increasing the administered prices. This was, particularly, true of the petroleum sector, with Rs. 6,000 crores deficit in the Oil Pool Account". The administered prices were not increased. This was his reaction.

Then, Madam, as the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Energy, what did he say? What did he recommend? I do not want to take his name here because he is not a Member of this House. I would only say 'former Finance Minister'. That is all I can say. 'In the Oil sector, diesel and kerosene prices had to be rationalised'. This was one recommendation. Secondly, 'subsidy on LPG should be gradually reduced'. Thirdly, 'the prices of products should reflect in the economic cost. This is, particularly, important because privatae sector marketing of products has to be promoted'. These were the recommendations.

Madam everybody talks of poor people, as if I do not know about the condition prevailing in the country. As if I do not know about the condition of the poor people. As if I come from the richest family where my father and mother used to feed me with a silver spoon or a golden spoon; Do I come from such a kind of family? Now, I am not going to shirk. It is destiny that has brought me here from my State. Therefore, I would like to discharge this responsibility to see that the poorer sections of the society are not allowed to suffer. Whether you keep me here or you remove me from here, I am not going to be afraid of that. I would like to say this with all the sincerity at my command.

For fifteen days, Madam, as the prime Minister of the country, I used to have 'Janta darshan'. I am not here to protect the privileged class. We are not here only to safeguard some sections of the people who have got, at least, something to eat. They may be getting Rs. 1,000/- as salary; they may be getting Rs. 2,000/- as salary. To pay Rs. 26 or Rs. 28/- more for a gas cylinder is a burden. I do understand. I can understand that because the cost of living has gone up. But do you know, without even a rupee as income, how many people are suffering in the country? Are we going to debate on this issue? Let us frankly discuss. Forget the parties.

Madam, earlier, for the first time, I used to have 'Janta Darshan' in Karnataka. Not only 'Janta Darshan'. I used to go to the districts also. From morning till night, I used to have meetings with the common people. I used to call the officers and whatever decisions I wanted to take on the spot, I used to give the decisions.

Here, I try to know. But the gap of language comes here, the communication gap. Normally I used to ask my officers to stand by my side.

Madam, I would like to mention only one instance. To fight for the cause of the poor is not the monopoly of Deve Gowda; it is the right of every one of you. I am not going to attribute it on party lines. Every political party has got its own programmes, its own policies, to fight for the cause of the poor. I am not going to say that I have taken the mono-

poly for fighting the cause of the poor. Let us see what is the prevailing situation in this country today.

One day—I think some hon. Members from Orissa are here—one family came to 7, Race Course Road where I had the Janata Darshan. The earning member of the family had lost his eyes. He had three small kids, all in torn clothes, the wife in a torn saree. Such is the society I have seen. With torn clothes the wife came, caught hold of the husband's hands and brought him to me in the Janata Darshan. The former Prime Minister also had given a letter to the Chief Minister of Orissa—this had happened about six, seven months back. Then they touched my feet as if I was an angel. When we go to their doors for begging votes, at that time we touch their feet. And when they come to our door, so much of security is there and so many SPG arrangements are there—to protect the life of the great man of this country! They started crying. And the Prime Minister of this country cannot do anything! So, that is the atmosphere I have to face today. I wrote a letter to the Chief Minister. I had written several letters to several Chief Ministers —that is a different aspect, and on some other occasion I will quote it. The letter written to the previous Chief Minister had not yielded any result. Then I paid about Rs. 600 or something like that for them to go back to Orissa and meet the Chief Minister. And if nothing happened, I asked them to come back. ...*(Interruptions)*... Just a minute. I told them to come back. I am going to appoint that lady in some hospital, at least as a peon or a scavenger or something like that. ..*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA: There are millions of people like that in this country.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Just one second. At least that I am trying to do, to solve one family's problem.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Congratulations, Prime Minister! Please continue to do it.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I am grateful to you that you have given me support.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: My party also is supporting you.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I am grateful. Let us all collectively work so that we can destroy the fascist forces. I will tell you very frankly today, a day was there when we were all saying that only the urban people were with them. Today, why even the rural people are thinking like this? It is because of our failure. It is not the Congress alone. Let us realize the ground realities. Today, all those people who are sitting on this side, whether it is a regional party or a national party, we should think of what damage had happened, why the people have been disillusioned and why they are thinking like this. Let us see whether they are fascists or communal forces. That is the thinking of the common man.

If you really want to revive yourselves, not by this hotchpotch arrangement, I know this, and I will tell you very ...*(Interruptions)*

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Please have some patience.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: When I am going to speak, I am going to speak without mixing politics. I am not going to speak mixing politics. Let us accept the reality. If the secular forces want to revive themselves, then, we should create confidence in those people who are today neglected, those people who have not got their due share. Let us apply our mind.

I will just give the figures. The people who have LPG connections below Rs. 750 per month monthly income, are 3.8 per cent. I am giving the official figures. These are not figures given in some magazines. I am not going to quote them. In this country the Fourth Estate is also going to play its own role. I am unable to manage it properly. I am not worried about it.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Every Prime Minister is like that.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I am not worried about that. I have survived in public life for 35 years without managing the Fourth Estate ...*(Interruptions)*

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): No running commentary, please. Let him complete the reply. It is not fair.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I am not going to caste aspersions on anybody. You have experienced, and I have also experienced how things are planted. We are suffering from the same problem, including yourselves, your party. Don't worry about it. Let us debate on some other occasion about how some sections of the people have played and how they have given rosy pictures on some issues.

I am just giving you the official figures. From Rs. 751 to Rs. 1,500 it is 25.9 per cent; from Rs. 1,501 to Rs. 2,500 it is 29.1 per cent; from Rs. 2,501 to Rs. 4,000, 23.5 per cent; over Rs. 4,000, 17.7 per cent. I have given the LPG users' economic background, the condition. Yes, there is some burden on these 3.8 per cent people who are getting below Rs. 750 per month income.

Then, I will come to other figures. I have given the LPG-user households. The other figures are the prices of the petroleum products in the neighbouring countries.

Ahluwalia Saheb, I have observed that you are a very powerful fighter.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Sir, I need some more information.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I will give it to you.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Please yield for one minute.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Please. I yield.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: You just mentioned about 3.8 per cent of the people who get below Rs. 750 per month.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: The LPG users

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Whatever it may be. That means Rs. 8,400 per annum or roughly Rs. 9,000 per annum. What is the poverty line of our country? What is the total?

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I will come to the point. The per capita income of an average Indian at 1981 rupee value—I quoted it in the other House—is Rs. 1,750.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Per annum?

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: You leave Punjab.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: No, no, no. I am talking about India. For your information, Sir, I am not from Punjab. I am from Bihar, the poorest State. And he is from Punjab. ...*(Interruptions)*

That is why I am concerned. I don't want to challenge your data. But I think there is some mistake in this data.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: These are purely official figures ...*(Interruptions)*... I would request you to permit me to give other information. What is the price in our neighbouring countries? After revision the LPG per kg. in India is Rs. 8.46. Earlier it was Rs. 6.61. Now, it is Rs. 8.46. In Malaysia, it is Rs. 16.12. In Bangladesh, it is Rs. 13.58. They are more richer than us. In Myanmar, it is Rs. 22.37. I have calculated it in Indian rupees. It is not in dollars. In Sri Lanka it is Rs. 13.04. In Thailand, it is Rs. 15.40. I am giving figures only about our neighbouring countries. I am not quoting figures of America or Germany.

SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA: Sir, it is very difficult to compare the level of income and the level of prices at two different ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Please listen to me.

Madam, so far as HSD is concerned, who are the consumers? Road trans-

port—61.8 per cent; Railways 4.3 per cent; Shipping 0.4; per cent. Agriculture 16.3 per cent; Industry—17.2 per cent. That is 100 per cent. About diesel vehicles on roads, diesel cars are 3,10,412, diesel jeeps are 5,98,191. Commercial vehicles are 21,27,504.

Madam, why I am quoting these figures is, in the case of diesel vehicle owners, it touches their pockets. On public transport, yes, there would be some impact on transport charges. I do agree. Some people say it is 2 per cent inflation, 5 per cent inflation. Our official figures say it is about 0.09 per cent which I have already given ...*(Interruptions)*... You may differ from that. But I have to rely upon figures given by the official machinery. I am not going to dispute what you are saying. But what officials have given, I must say that.

I would just like to make one more point for the consideration of this august House. During Morarji Desai's period, the hike in the price of LPG was 9.2 per cent on 1.3.1979. During the late Chowdhury Charan Singh Sahib's period, the date of hike was 17.8.1979; and the budget was presented on 28.2.1979. So, after six months the hike in the LPG price was 20.4 per cent.

There was a 14 per cent increase in HSD. Madam Gandhi's Budget was placed before this House on 28-2-1981, but the price hike was on 13.1.1981, one month earlier. There was a 17 per cent increase in LPG; it was 18.9 per cent in HSD. On 11.7.1981, within six months, the price of diesel was again increased by 13.7 per cent and that of LPG, by 14.5 per cent. Within six months, in 1981, there was a 31.5 per cent increase in LPG price; and the increase in HSD was 32.6 per cent. Then I come to late Rajiv Gandhi's period. I have tried to get the figures. On 17.3.1985, the price of LPG was increased by 15 per cent. On 1.2.1986, there was an increase of 23 per cent and subsequently, it was reduced by nine per cent. During the last five years, the position was like this. On 25.7.1991, the increase in the price of LPG was 20 per cent. On 16.9.1992, the price of LPG increased by 24 per cent. On 12.1.1994, the increase was 20.6 per cent. In three years, from 1991 to 1994, the increase in LPG price was 64.7 per cent. And subsequently, there was a reduction by 6.9 per cent. These are the factual figures.

Yes, I took the decision to increase the price of LPG by 30 per cent. But I have not given the figures of the previous years for kerosene. If you want, I will read out those figures also. There was a 25 per cent increase on one occasion; then there were increases of 8.3 per cent, 14.2 per cent and 10.8 per cent. The price of kerosene also incresed. But I have not increased the price of kerosene. Why? In my opinion, kerosene is going to be used by the common man. I have not touched kerosene. Some people say there will be adulteration and all that. When we took the decision, it was said that there would be a lot of adulteration and we should also increase marginally the price of kerosene. This issue came before us. The officers advised us. But I said, "Whether you increase or not, adulteration cannot be stopped all of a sudden. It will be there. At this juncture, I do not want to increase the price of kerosene because the common man will be affected." That is why we did not touch it.

On HSD price increase, public opinion was very sharp. The Congress, the BJP and the Left parties and even the common man and the Press reacted sharply. Their reaction was sharp. Then I took the decision to reduce the hike by 15 per cent. That also I must confess.

Even after this, what is the subsidy component we are giving to LPG? Per cylinder, we are giving Rs. 62/-. Hon. Vice-Chairperson, I would like to make myself clear. Even today, we are giving Rs. 62.55 per cylinder. On the Oil Pool Account, by March 1997, again the deficit will be Rs. 4700 crores. That is the

projection given by the department concerned.

7.00 P.M.

Again, there is a deficit. I am not going to totally erase the deficit over here. But, so far as the Oil Pool Account is concerned, this is the ground reality. Yes, we have taken a decision which is not a pleasant decision nor is it a decision which is going to be welcomed by everybody. Some sections have to bear the burden. I do not want to claim that I am the only person fighting for the cause of the poor man. Madam Vice-Chairman, I would like to make this point clear that within fifteen days of my assuming office—becuase for twelve days the legitimacy of this Government was not proved and I did not want to take any major decision, I actually issued instructions to all the Secretaries not to take any decision till the Vote of Confidence was cleared—I called a conference of all the Chief Ministers. I myself sat and prepared the agenda as to what were the issues which were required to be discussed in the Chief Ministers Conference and I had sent it for the comments of the Chief Ministers informing them to come prepared so far as those issues were concerned. I would like to mention this point that the Chief Ministers' conference was held for two days and I sat there for sixteen hours. I wanted to hear everything as to what were their views. For sixteen hours I did not go out. Let me tell you. I had also attended the Prime Minister's conference as Irrigation Minister thrice when Shrimati Indira Gandi was there, when Rajiv Gandhi was there. They used to normally inaugurate and the concerned Irrigation Minister used to sit there to preside over the meeting. But I sat for sixteen hours on the two days and I am happy to say this that irrespective of the political parties, whether it was BJP, whether it was Congress, whether it was CPI or CPI(M), whether it was DMK or Telugu Desham, to whichever political they belonged, we had taken a unanimous decision, identifying seven areas to which we should give priority. I would like to draw the attention of the House not for the purpose of criticism. Past is past. I am not going to say that they have not done anything in these forty-eight years. But commensurate with the problems of this country, whether the developmental works which have been taken up or completed by us are sufficient--let us think over that. I do not want to say that nothing was being done in this country and everything was a waste. I am not prepared to accept that position. We have done something. We have tried to solve the problems to some extent. We have tried to implement several anti-poverty programmes. I am not going to say that nothing has been done. But what is the actual situation prevailing today? The population problem is on the increase. It is also there. I would just like to bring to the notice of this august House the report given by the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. I am not going to say anythig about the other States. Why have I taken up Uttar pradesh only? The State of Uttar Pradesh has produced six or seven Prime Ministers. Even in Uttar Pradesh, out of 1.18 lakh villages, more than half are not connected with all-weather roads even today. You know about Bihar. I do not want to mention Bihar because some massacre took place in Bihar in which about 25 people were killed. I wanted to go there the same day. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Sir, we all know that there are 5,76,000 villages in the country out of which only 3,20,000 villages are connected with all-weather roads. We know all these figures. ...*(Interruptions)*... We know all these figures; we know for the last 48 years what we have achieved, but there are problems. You people were also speaking in this House. Whenever a tax was imposed, whenever price-rise took place, what did you people do? You should think about that also. ...*(Interruptions)*... You people took up cudgels with the Government; you never allowed to

function it. You should think about that also. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Ahluwaliaji, I am not going to blame anybody. ...*(Interruptions)*... I am not going to blame anybody. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Let the Prime Minister finish his reply.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I said, "Irrespective of the political party, all the Chief Ministers cooperated." I said this.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Sir, I agree with all your logic, why you have raised the price of oil. I agree with that. We need not discuss these matters. We need not ...*(Interruptions)*... Sir, when you sit this side, your role was different; Now when you sit that side, your role is ...*(Interruptions)*... You are heading the Government. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Ahluwalia, I would request you, please do not go on interrupting the Prime Minister like this. ...*(Interruptions)*... Let him finish. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, let these Communist Members not preach us ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI MD. SALIM: We know their conduct. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: The hon. Members from the Communist Party did not allow the former Prime Minister, whether it was Mr. Rajiv Gandhi or Mr. Narasimha Rao. ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Narayanasamy, what they had done in the past, would you like to repeat the same with the present Prime Minister? I thing you should not behave like this. ...*(Interruptions)*... You should not behave in the same manner. ...*(Interruptions)*... You should not behave in the same manner or in the same fashion. ...*(Interruptions)*... Mr. singla ...*(Interruptions)*... Mr. Singla, I request ...*(Interruptions)*... Mr. Singla, I request that when the Prime Minister has not completed his reply, we do not have a right to interrupt him every now and then. Please do not do that. Please discipline yourself. ...*(Interruptions)*... No interruptions. ...*(Interruptions)*... No more interruptions now ... *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Kindly tell them also.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I am telling them also. ...*(Interruptions)*... If they are behaving like this, that does not mean that you should also behave like them. No more ...*(Interruptions)*... Please, no argument with the Chair. ...*(Interruptions)*... No more interruptions, please.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Narayanasamy, please; after all, in politics there is no permanent enemy and there is no permanent friend. ...*(Interruptions)*... You know much more than I do. ...*(Interruptions)*... We should take things cordially. When I was in a meeting, you all pressed that the Prime Minister should come to reply to this ssue. ...*(Interruptions)*...

SOME HON. MEMBERS: We only insisted, Sir.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Because I was watching the TV, I immediately rushed to the House on the demand of the House.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Sir, it is very nice of you that on the request of the Members you have come to the House and you are replying to their queries.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I do not mind ...*(Interruptions)*... I have never showed during my life-time disrespect to the House. This is the highest august institution; I cannot do that. I left the meeting. I have come over here. I am not going to cast aspersions against anybody.

I have only placed the facts. In fact, in the year 1993-94, if I am correct, when I was in the other House as a Member of the Lok Sabha, Mr. Narasimha Rao announced Rs. 30,000 crores for rural development, I paid an open compliment. Today see what is the magintude of the problem before us. What is the magnitude of the problem? We should all collectively think over this issue, that is all; an appeal I want to make to this august House, nothing beyond that. There is no question of casting aspersions against anybody. What is the magnitude of the problem? Let us see Bombay which has palatial buildings, but the pipes are dry. They want to bring water to Bombay city. They have to live there. Their wives will give birth to children and they will die without nutrition. We all see this. Everybody experience this. There is housing problem today. Twenty-three per cent of the people have no roof today. We will collectively work. If the credit comes, we will share the credit with everybody. There is no question of supporting from outside or inside. We will share the credit with everybody. I am not such a person to think on those lines. There are 35,000 schools in the rural areas in the same State. I am going to give all the figures. Don't mistake me. Then I will stop it *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Madam Chairperson called me and said that I was interrupting. I have never interrupted. We want more information. Acutally the debate is on the price hike. This is not a debate for giving statistics on our development. It is not based on them. But you are giving them. It is all right because you are the Prime Minister. You have full right to speak. *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Now just one minute. *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: No, this is not the answer. The point is that the entire nation is watching and this information is available in the statistics books. We are not cowboys. I have been in the Parliament for the last eleven years. I know all these things. I am a Parliamentarian. I know all these things. I don't need a lecture on this.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Knowing all these things,

I think you will kindly support me.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: I support you I have never spoken against you for raising the price. I am in favour of that.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Thank you very much.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: Whatever stand my party takes and my other colleagues take, I say that this is a must. This is a must for a developing country. But the unfortunate thing is that till yesterday, when we were sitting on the other side, you were criticising us from this side. You were not doing it personally. You ask your party colleagues. These people were doing that. *(Interruptions)* ... I am reminding you of it. I am just reminding you that the role of Parliamentarians changes. When the seat changes, the role changes. That is all.

SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA: Madam, I want to make one thing clear. We were opposing the price hike at that point of time and we are opposing the price hike at this point of time. *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: They will still continue in the Government also. *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I have mentioned this. In my speech itself I have mentioned this. *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, the hon. Prime Minister has not answered any of my questions. That is my complaint. *(Interruptions)* ... I have initiated the discussion. *(Interruptions)* ...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Narayanasamy, this is quarter past seven. *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, I am going to be brief. *(Interruptions)* ...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): The Prime Minister has not completed his reply. *(Interruptions)* ... No, he has not completed his reply. *(Interruptions)* ... Mr. Narayanasamy, he has not completed his reply.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I would like to mention one or two points. I have told you about the subsidies. As regards LPG, it is Rs. 62.55 per cylinder. One of the other areas which I would like to mention is kerosene. Today on kerosene we are giving subsidy to the tune of Rs. 4870 crores. It is Rs. 4.17 per litre. In Bomaby, Calcutta and Madras, the subsidy on suburban trains component is Rs. 220 crores. I have got the figures for these three cities only. The subsidy to Delhi Transport Corporation is Rs. 120 crores.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA: It is a socialist country. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: You are talking about subsidies. *(Interruptions)*. It is a continuing process. It is not a new phenomenon. The previous Government gave subsidies. All Governments give subsidy. It is a continuing process. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: I never said that I had introduced it. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Now you would appreciate how much the Congress Government was concerned about it when it was ruling. We were facing many problems. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Mr. Ravi ..... *(Interruptions)*. My only appeal to my friend, Mr. Vayalar Ravi, is, now our direction must be changed. We will try to change our direction collectively. We will change our direction collectively. That is my appeal. In Delhi alone how much subsidy do we give on milk? In fact, I wanted to make a surprise visit to the slums in Delhi. But our LPG, I am sorry SPG, not LPG ... *(Interruptions)* — I was only cutting a joke —our SPG people said, "No, Sir, you cannot visit. If you want to visit, you must inform us two days earlier. We will make pucca arrangements and make the doors closed and then you could go to their streets". That is the situation today. Why am I saying this? Let us go out today in the Delhi city. Are they not poor people? How many people have got houses? How many people in slums have got LPG connections? How many people are getting subsidised milk? Let us change our direction now. Those people who have got some strength, some economic backing, let them cooperate with the Government to solve the problem of those people who have been denied the basic needs. That should be our approach. That should be our philosophy. If you want that the fascist force should not raise its head, we should take a decision collectively and help those people who are suffering today. We must see to it that the suffering masses are lifted and bailed out. That is the philosophy of this Government. I hope that all my friends will cooperate with me and will agree that the decision which I have taken is in the right direction. That is all I have to say. *(Interruptions)*.

SHRI SATISH AGARWAL: Madam, I am sorry to say that instead of lecturing on general issues, the hon. Prime Minister should have replied to the points that we raised during the debate which were relevant issues under discussion. Madam, I am sorry to say that he has not replied to the major points that we raised during the debate and he has lectured generally on poverty and economic situation and this visit and that visit. I am very sorry to say that as a mark of protest, I along with my party colleagues, have no option but to stage a walk-out. *(Interruptions)*.

(At this Stage some hon. Members left the Chamber)

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, I had raised three important points. The hon. Prime Minister has not touched any of them. The first point was about propriety. The Prime Minister should answer this point. Madam, when we were on this side of the House the prices of petroleum products were increased in 1994 before the General Budget. At that time very senior Members, Shri Gurudas Das Gupta, Dr. Biplab Dasgupta and Shri Jaipal Reddy who is the spokesman of the party, raised a hue and cry in the House. They said that the House was not taken into confidence by the Government *(Interruptions)*. Kindly have some patience. They also said that the then Government was doing it in an indirect manner and through backdoor. *(Interruptions)*. You must admit it. It is on record.

They had said very clearly that this Government had done it without taking the Parliament into confidence. Today, what is happening? On the second, at mid night, the prices were increased. The Budget is going to be presented on the 22nd; and for the purpose of showing a rosy picture to the people of this country, they have increased the prices of petroleum products well in advance. This is what they are doing ... *(Interruptions)* ...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS. SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Narayanasamy, are we going to start another long duration discussion? The Prime Minister has covered each and every point raised by the hon. Members ... *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: He has not answered this point. You kindly go through the records ... *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI SOM PAL: This point was repeated many times by many speakers in this House. At that time we were working as a sincere Opposition and now we are working as a responsible Government. We are discharging our duty... *(Interruptions)* ...

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: I have a request. The Members of the House had the opportunity to put many questions to the hon. Prime Minister while he was speaking. Now the Prime Minister has given his reply. If you ask me. I am also not satisfied. But what can be done? We have to come to some conclusion.. *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: You can console yourself. But I cannot ... *(Interruptions)* ...

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: It is already 7.20. Please adjourn the House ... *(Interruptions)* ...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): The Prime Minister has really given a very comprehensive reply. He has replied to all the queries raised by Members on this side and on the other side. We actually converted the Short Duration discussion into a long duration discussion. Now if you start the same thing again, it will be difficult. It is going to be 7.30 p.m. I think we are all happy and we are all satisfied with the reply given by the Prime Minister. If you permit me, then we can take up the clarifications ...*(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Let the Prime Minister answer my point ... *(Interruptions)* ...

DR. BIPLAB DASGUPTA: Madam, may the House be adjourned ... *(Interruptions)* ... I am moving this motion that the House be adjourned ...*(Interruptions)*...

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): If you permit me, I shall proceed further. would you like to sit after 7.30 p.m., for the clarifications? I do not mind. I am prepared to sit here. Are you prepared to sit here? The Minister is ready to reply to the clarifications .... *(Interruptions)* .... The Prime Minister has already given the reply and if you will permit me we can take up the clarifications regarding the aircraft accident near Kullu on the 11th of July ... *(Interruptions)* ...

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: He has not answered my point ... *(Interruptions)...*

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: The hon. Member, Shri Narayanasamy, had raised the propriety issue ... *(Interruptions)...*

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Narayanasamy is very agitated. He wanted to make to other points. Let him make his point and then you can reply.

SHRI V. NARAYANASAMY: Madam, in 1991, when the Congress (I) Government was in power, the price of crude oil was 21 dollars per barre. Today, it is 16.5 dollars per barre. Now, since 1991, the price of the petroleum product has been much less. Today it is around 16 dollars per barre. Even if you compare it with the 1991 prices taking into account the increase in the dollar value, it is still equal. Then, where is the necessity to increase the price of the petroleum products? The final point, Madam, is, the Prime Minister was quoting the figures. I fully endorse his views that the poor people should be given the benefit. Madam, according to the situation prevailing in the country, the average income of the people is Rs. 1,500 per month. At least these people whose income is below Rs.1,500 per month should be given the benefit. The Prime Minister should say that he is reducing the prices of LPG. As far as petroleum is concerned, Mr. Prime Minister, you are coming from a rural area. Even a villager is using a two-wheeler these days. Today, a farmer is having a two-wheeler. Kindly think of those people and not just the 17 per cent of the people who are living in the urban areas and who are rich people. I request you with folded hands. Kindly consider reduction in the petroleum and LPG prices at least marginally for the purpose of telling the people of this country that this Government is for the poor.

SHRI H.D. DEVE GOWDA: Madam, on the issue of propriety, the Chair has already ruled in the other House. I would like to make myself clear. There is no intention of this Government to evade coming before the House. I have already mentioned about the correspondences between the Chairman of the several oil refineries of the petroleum sector. And under what circumstances, the previous Prime Minister had passed orders also, I read out. I would like to tell you very frankly. The issue before me at that time was, to ensure regular supply. I asked what the actual amount due by each company to several suppliers was If decision had not been taken it would have created a chaos in supply. Let us not be emotional and try to attribute motives to each other. When this matter was brought before me on 3rd June, I said, "I am unable to take a decision. Let us go before the Cabinet." It was not an overnight decision. I have already explained how all decisions so far as the administered price hike is concerned have been taken.

All the petroleum depots closed around 11 p.m. or 12 a.m. and the decision would come into effect only in the morning. That was the reason why they would announce the price hike after the closure of petrol bunks. That was what was done in this case also. It is not a midnight decision. The decision was announced only after the accounts were closed. That is the practice for the last 40 years. It is not as if something new has happened. Please don't unnecessarily draw any inference, negative inference. I am placing the facts. May I tell you only one point? I don't want to attribute motives. That is what I said earlier. From the Oil Pool Account, more than 4,000 crores of rupees were taken to the General Budget. How? Actually, the oil companies or the Indian Oil Company whichever is the case, were made to starve. There was considerable correspondence. I don't want to place all those facts before the House. Rs.4,429 crores were transferred over a period of time from the Oil Pool Account to the Public Deposit Account. But how to

overcome the so-called deficiency? The deficit has to be met. I am not going to find fault with the previous Finance Ministry. Whatever was the situation at that time, I don't want to narrate. I might tell you one more thing for your kind consideration because this is not for any publication. Very frankly, you are fighting for the cause of the poor-- it is a genuine thing. I am not going to question it. There is a surcharge of Rs. 900 per M.T. on crude oil, the indigenous crude oil, which should go to the Oil Pool Account. I have already narrated how the Oil Pool Account was made to starve and what the compelling reasons for hiking the prices of the petroleum products were, etc. After this, I would only make one point. Today I am here, in this place. Tomorrow somebody else may be in my place. Whoever is there, there is no option. Let us understand this. We are doing our best, whatever is possible. It is not that we are taking something here and giving something there. Even today, we have to bear the responsibility for nearly Rs. 4700 crores' deficit in the Oil Pool Account and the subsidy, as you know, is Rs.4.17 per litre on kerosin and Rs. 62.55 per LPG cylinder. This subsidy is there even today. So, please bear with me; please co-operate with me. This decision is taken in the best interest of the nation.

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): Mr. Narayanasamy, are you happy? ...*(interruptions)*....I cannot make everybody happy. So, you should not have any grudge against me.

SHRI S. MUTHU MANI: Madam, we are not satisfied with the reply of the Prime Minister because the decision taken by this Government is affecting all sections of our population. Today the expectation of the common man is belied and he is frustrated. The nation is frustrated by the reply of the Prime Minister. So, there is no other way for us but to stage a walkout.

(At this stage, some hon. Members left the Chamber)

THE VICE-CHAIRMAN (MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE): I think we are all satisfied with the Prime Minister's reply. Now, if the House agrees, I will take up clarifications on the statement regarding aircraft accident near Kullu on 11th July, 1996.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Let us take it up tomorrow.

श्री महेश्वर सिंह: महोदया, मैं एक अपील करना चाहता हूं। यह इतना महत्वपूर्ण विषय है जिसमें 9 लोगों की जानें गयी हैं। उनके सैक्योरिटी मेज़र्स का ध्यान नहीं रखा गया, इसलिए ऐसा हुआ है। मेरे पास कुछ महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न है। तीन दिन से लगातार हम यहां सुबह से शाम तक बैठे रहे। आपने भी यह निर्देश दिया था कि आज निश्चित रूप से यह स्पष्टीकरण ली जाएंगी। मेरा निवेदन है कि कम से कम मुझे मंत्री जी से स्पष्टीकरण पूछने का अवसर दिया जाए।

उपसभाध्यक्ष (कुमारी सरोज खापर्डे): मुझे कोई ऐतराज नहीं है। मंत्री जी भी तैयार हैं।

श्री महेश्वर सिंह: तीन लोग हैं। खत्म हो जाएगा, ज्यादा लम्बा चौड़ा नहीं है।

CLARIFICATIONS ON THE STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Air Craft accident near Kullu on 11th July, 1996

SHRI JOHN F. FERNANDES (Goa): Madam, the hon. Minister had already made a preliminary statement on the day the accident took place. Yesterday, he made a comprehensive statement. But there are reports in the Press that the private airlines often violate the load factor. They declare adults and infants. In this particular case, that was not the case because there were only nine passengers. There are no checks and balances because the office of the DGCA is at the headquarters. At the various airports, I don't think there is any check. In this particular case, we don't know how the permission was given by the airport authorities, by the ATC, because we were told that the weather was very bad and there was very poor visibility. Why are they playing with the lives of people? I would like to know whether the